The Experience and Recollections from the Faculties, Schools, Institutes and Centres

Makerere’s Institute of Economics: New Programmes and a Contested Divorce

The Harare-based African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF), had been sponsoring a Masters degree in Economics, which taught African Economics at postgraduate level to assist African governments improve economic policy management for a number of years. McGill University in Montreal, Canada was running the programme for the English speaking African countries on behalf of the ACBF. However, after training a number of African economists at the university for some time, the ACBF was convinced that it made sense to transfer the training to Africa. McGill was not only expensive, it had another disadvantage: students studied in an alien environment, divorced from the realities of African economic problems. This necessitated a search for suitable universities in Anglophone Africa which had the capacity to host the programme. Acting on behalf of the ACBF, McGill University undertook a survey of universities in Anglophone Africa and identified two promising ones which met most of the conditions on ACBF’s checklist for hosting and servicing a regional programme of that kind. Earlier in 1996, Dr Apollinaire Ndorukwiga of the ACBF had visited Makerere to explore the possibility of Makerere participating in the new Economic Policy Management programme. On this particular visit, he said he was not making any commitments because McGill University was yet to undertake a detailed survey of a number of universities in Africa and, based on the findings, McGill University would advise the ACBF on the two most suitable universities which would host the programme. His was just an exploratory visit. His visit was followed with
that of Dr Jacques Katuala in 1997. At the time, ACBF had begun to support the Economic Policy Research Centre which was Jacques Katuala’s main interest. Then in 1998, a delegation from McGill University, led by Professor Jan Jorgensen of McGill Business School, visited Makerere. After explaining the purpose of their visit and without promising anything, Professor Jorgensen requested to see the Head of the Department of Economics and the Dean of the Faculty of Commerce. The McGill delegation was interested in gathering as much data as possible on Makerere to be used in the evaluation of the university’s strength and weakness during the selection process. Besides Makerere, they were due to visit several other universities in Africa, because as Professor Jorgensen pointed out, the selection of the two universities that would eventually host the programme on behalf of the ACBF was through a competitive process. At that time, they were just conducting the evaluation, and had no idea which universities would be selected. We had to wait until they had visited all the universities on their list. After the preliminaries, I decided to invite Dr John Ddumba Sentamu who was then the Head of the Department of Economics and Waswa Balunywa, Dean of Commerce, to meet the delegation from Canada for more technical discussions. A few days later, the delegation left.

Although I wished Makerere would be one of the two universities McGill would select to host the programme in Africa, I was not sure we were ready to run a continental programme. At the time, the Department of Economics and the Faculty of Commerce were housed on cramped premises. The Faculty of Commerce just had about one member of staff, who had a PhD from Eastern Europe. Frankly, I did not think Makerere stood a chance at all. Having visited it a few years before, I was aware that McGill was an extremely well-endowed university in Canada and, by comparison, I saw Makerere as one of the poorly resourced African universities in terms of human resources and infrastructure and therefore, in my opinion, a bit further down the McGill scale. Certainly, the evaluators would be looking for an African university with standards comparable to those at McGill University. I was convinced that such endowed universities in sub-Saharan Africa could only be found in South Africa. However, I decided to leave it at that and wait for the outcome. It was now a question of “wait and see”. McGill and the ACBF took time to announce the outcome of the evaluation exercise and the final two universities were selected. Surprisingly, after a tough selection process, Makerere University and the University of Ghana at Legon were the two which the evaluators had selected to host the MAEPM for English-speaking Africa. The University of Yaoundé in Cameroon and the University of Abidjan, Cocody in Ivory Coast had been chosen to host the programme for Francophone Africa, as was previously offered at CERDI, University of Clemont Farrand in France.

Although the news was worth celebrating, I was still curious to know how we had managed to beat off the competition in spite of the problems. Then I
remembered the old African adage: “the gods help those who help themselves”. Since the fall of Idi Amin, Makerere had been busy bootstrapping itself out of its problems and with a reasonable degree of success. Indeed, we learnt that Makerere won the selection bid, because the Canadian team had discovered that it was one of the few universities in Africa outside South Africa which was implementing serious internal reforms. That had impressed the evaluators and helped to tip the balance in Makerere’s favour. I was told that many universities the Canadian delegation had visited were talking about reforms, but with nothing concrete translated into action. Dr Apollinaire Ndurukwigira of the ACBF, who had also visited a few years earlier and was in charge of institutional evaluation, told me that Makerere was selected not because it had superb facilities, but because of its innovativeness and clear vision.

After going through all the procedures as laid down by Senate and Council, the Department of Economics launched the programme in 1998. Besides the traditional MA by thesis, the MAEPM was the second taught Masters degree in the department and had to be run as a joint programme with the Faculty of Commerce, which later became Makerere University Business School. The Department of Economics would teach all the Economics courses, while the Faculty of Commerce would handle the Management modules. A few months later, I was invited to Harare to sign the necessary protocols with the Executive Secretary of the ACBF after which we would formally launch the new programme. The first time I was invited, I could not go. So, I asked Professor Luboobi and Dr John Ddumba Sentamu to stand in for me. On that occasion, the ceremony was cancelled at the last moment. The next time when the ACBF was ready to sign the protocols, I flew to Harare with John Ddumba Sentamu. The Executive Secretary, Dr Soumana Sako, signed on behalf of the ACBF and I signed on behalf of Makerere University.

As these developments were taking place, the Department of Economics, then one of the largest departments in the Faculty of Social Sciences, requested Senate and University Council to upgrade it to an autonomous Institute of Economics. As expected, there was uproar in the faculty; but after protracted discussions and several meetings, the faculty Board of Social Sciences agreed to grant the department the autonomy and let go. This in effect meant that the Department of Economics was breaking away from Social Sciences. The University Senate had no difficulty endorsing the proposal from the Social Sciences Department. The University Council approved the transformation of the department into an autonomous Institute of Economics in the 2000/2001 academic year, starting with three departments: Economic Theory and Analysis; Development Economics; Applied Economics (and an Economic Research Bureau). Dr John Ddumba Ssentamu had the honour of being the institute’s pioneer Director. Unfortunately, the new institute had no home of its own. As a department, it
occupied a lot of space in the old Social Sciences building and had a few offices in the new Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) building. Now that it was an autonomous unit, the Faculty of Social Science wanted the institute to vacate all the space of the defunct Department of Economics in the Social Sciences buildings. The institute counter-argued that all assets in the faculty were the property of all departments and if the new Institute of Economics had to vacate the buildings, the Faculty of Social Sciences was under obligation to compensate it for the lost space. The Dean of Social Sciences, Dr Joy Kwesiga felt the issue had gone beyond her and decided to refer it to me.

Right from the beginning, I knew I was handling a hot potato I was least prepared for. In an attempt to douse the tempers and find an amicable solution, or at least a reasonable compromise, I held several meetings with all parties involved and at one point, I had reason to believe we had resolved the problem. I was disappointed when I continued to receive complaints of non-compliance with the agreed position. The compromise we had struck required the Institute of Economics to surrender some offices that belonged to the defunct Department of Economics in exchange for others on the different floors of the two Social Sciences buildings. There was also a growing but understandable feeling amongst members of staff that their faculty was shrinking in size and being marginalised. Over the years, it had lost the Law Department – the forerunner to the present Faculty of Law; the Department of Commerce, which became the Faculty of Commerce and later the Business School; and now one of its largest departments was also breaking away. The consolation we offered them was that what was happening was not unique to their faculty. Other faculties too, such as the Faculty of Science, were in the same situation. They too had lost units which, in the course of time, became autonomous institutes or even new Faculties. Moreover, we were of the view that what was happening in the Faculty of Social Sciences was a healthy and normal development. It was an inevitable progression that existing Faculties would continue to nurture new departments and that even Faculties would later break away and become autonomous units.

The challenge the Faculty of Social Sciences was facing was to be able to come up with new programmes and units to beef up the remaining stock of departments. However, I soon realised that my efforts were not yielding results. I asked the University Secretary, Avitus Tibarimbasa, to take over. Unfortunately, he too was drawing blanks. His many visits to the Faculty of Social Sciences were not yielding results either. It began to appear that there was something we were missing. Another way of solving the problem had to be found. We set up a small committee, chaired by Professor Livingstone Luboobi, to probe further into the dispute that was threatening to degenerate into an intractable dispute between the faculty and the young Institute of Economics and recommend new approaches to solve the problem of asset sharing. Fortunately, the Luboobi Committee was able
to sort out all the problems. The Faculty of Social Sciences and MUIE went their separate ways, having agreed to a new formula of sharing assets.

Besides the revenue accruing to the institute and the university from the World Bank scholarships for the MAEPM students who came from all over Africa, the ACBF set aside funds for the renovation of the small old bungalow on Pool Road, next to the Economic Policy Research Centre, which had been home for the MA in Economic Policy and Planning. During the renovation, some rooms were expanded to create more space for a Resource Centre and study rooms. The old tin roof was replaced with red burnt clay tiles. This small old house, which was once a staff residence served as the first home for the young institute. When the ACBF evaluated the programme in 2002, the assessors noted good progress and recommended further funding, which ACBF accepted. To formalise the new phase agreement, Dr Ddumba Sentamu and I had to travel to Harare and to Abidjan. The Abidjan meeting, held in the premises of the African Development Bank, brought all four universities participating in the programme together for the first time. As it turned out, Makerere had edged ahead in a few aspects of the programme, in particular the implementation of the ICT component of the programme. I was happy for my young institute. Sadly, that was the last meeting I attended at the African Development Bank before it moved to Accra, Ghana and finally Tunis, a change prompted by the political turmoil and security risks in Cote d’Ivoire at the time. Indeed, the new institute made tremendous progress in its formative year, giving the impression that it had always been there. One of its earlier and enthusiastic supporters was the Academic Registrar, Dr Mukwanason Hyuha, who used to teach there on a part-time basis. No doubt, one can attribute the impressive progress the institute achieved so soon after its establishment to Dr Ddumba’s good leadership and his team of well-seasoned economists, including the Ivy League trained, Dr Germina Semwogerere.

In addition to the two graduate programmes, the MAEPP and the MAEPM, the institute introduced its own undergraduate degree; the Bachelor of Arts in Economics, launched in 2003. Besides these developments, the Institute of Economics is one of the academic units at Makerere credited for pioneering a new PhD programme similar to the American system, which combined taught courses with a thesis. Up until then, a Makerere PhD was a research-only degree. A student carried out research under the guidance of the supervisor, wrote a thesis and submitted it for examination. The thesis was subjected to internal and external examination and a viva voce – the oral defence. Before the 1980s, the viva voce was not part of the examination. The external examiners’ report was final. The new approach pioneered by the institute required a student to study a number courses in the first two years (the first four semesters), pass the written examinations and write a comprehensive examination before proceeding to the thesis stage. The thesis would take a minimum of two years to complete.
Therefore, the minimum duration for this type of PhD is four years instead of the usual three. A PhD combining taught courses and research was a break from the old tradition.

The Institute of Economics had made such an impressive progress in the first four years of its existence to the extent that, shortly before my departure in 2004, it applied for and was granted the status of the Faculty of Economics and Management. The change in status from an institute to a faculty came with another postgraduate degree: the Master of Arts in Economics, a new addition to the growing number of postgraduate degrees. One of the interesting and innovative features of this programme was the introduction of two options, A and B. Option A required students to write a full-blown dissertation in their second year of study. Students opting for Option B took more courses, followed by a short research paper. Traditionally a full-blown dissertation was always a must for all Masters degrees at Makerere. This meant that, after the taught courses, a student spent a whole year or longer working on the dissertation. Many students failed to complete their degrees within the stipulated two years, because they spent a lot of time writing the dissertation. Even after submitting the dissertation, the examination would take ages to complete. In fact, it was not uncommon for students to spend four years or longer on a two-year programme, simply because they failed to finish their dissertations on time; and many students became time barred and also lost their sponsorship. Under Option B, it was possible for a student to finish a Masters degree in less than two years. The University Senate embraced the change and recommended it to the University Council for approval. Council's approval came pretty fast. The Business School also adopted this approach for its Master of Business Administration and for a few other Masters degrees offered there. Besides its own programmes, the institute continued to service many faculties, other institutes and departments where the study of Economics was a requirement. As Faculty of Economics and Management, it had also taken on an additional responsibility of servicing the external Bachelor of Commerce (BCom) degree programme, in conjunction with the Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (IACE). Initially, the Business School was servicing the degree programme. However, the persistent wrangling between the Business School and IACE necessitated a change. As expected, the Business School authorities were not happy to see the external BCom taken away from them. In fact, they put up a spirited fight but all was in vain. The confusion had gone on for too long and everyone was fed up.

At Makerere, Economics is one of the most popular disciplines amongst the social sciences. Therefore, the Institute of Economics never had shortage of good and eager students at both undergraduate and graduate level. This, coupled with frugal financial management, enabled the institute to save enough money to put up a modern building on the northern side of its original home on Pool Road,
next to the defunct Uganda Commercial Bank building left uncompleted since
the 1978/79 liberation war. The new building which now houses the Faculty
of Economics and Management was completed shortly after I had retired. As
the construction of the new building progressed, I took nearly all Deans and
Directors on a tour of eleven South African universities. Although we were
criticised for undertaking what was considered an expensive tour; in my view,
we gained a wealth of experience out of this study tour. Suffice it to mention
here, we discovered that in most universities, Economics and Management were
combined under one faculty. The University of Pretoria was the best example of
this combination. Given the difficulties and ambiguities we were experiencing
with the new Act in relation to the Business School, which under the new Law
had become an independent entity, we wondered whether we could borrow from
the South African experience. Dr Ddumba Sentamu and his staff decided to have
a go at it. By early 2004, they were ready to present their proposal for a Faculty
of Economics and Management, in place of the Institute of Economics, to Senate
and the University Council. At the time, Professor Epelu Opio chaired most of
the Senate sessions that scrutinised and passed proposals for new programmes
and new academic units, and made recommendations to the University Council.

Amazingly, in a space of slightly over four years, the Institute of Economics,
now the Faculty of Economics and Management, had acquired its own modern
and beautiful buildings and an impressive list of flourishing academic programmes,
one of them servicing the Anglophone parts of Africa. It was little wonder that
when time came for staff to choose a Dean for their new faculty, Dr Ddumba
Sentamu, their busy bee Director, was the obvious choice. Hard work, wit on the
part of the Institute Director and his staff, as well as the new measures we had
introduced to reduce the red tape and boost efficiency, paid off handsomely. As
a matter of fact, decision-making at Senate and Council was now very fast, so
much so that the decision to transform the institute into a faculty was made in
the wink of an eye. It also meant that the people responsible for preparing and
producing the necessary documentation were doing a thorough professional job.
Additionally, the management of the external BCom degree in conjunction with
the Institute of Adult and Continuing Education became a lot easier, despite the
protests from the Business School. My unreserved salutations to all who made it
possible.

Faculty of Technology – Source of Uganda’s Engineers and all
Technical Professionals

Innovation at Makerere was not the exclusive preserve of the old Department of
Economics. The Faculty of Technology too was busy toying with new ideas. The
major handicap the faculty faced was space. As we saw earlier, the faculty was
one of the causalties of the misrule Uganda had to endure for many years. In
place of the three buildings planned for the faculty in 1969, only the Mechanical Engineering building had been constructed; moreover, it was poorly completed. All disciplines offered in the faculty were crammed under one small building. However, the handicap did not deter members of staff there to start thinking creatively. Since it opened its doors to a few pioneer students in 1970, the faculty had no graduate degree programmes in any of the three engineering disciplines. The only graduate programme in the faculty offered was the Master of Physical Panning, launched in 1992 with the assistance of the German Government through its technical cooperation agency – GTZ. In 1998 or thereabout, during one of those casual talks we used to engage in whenever we met, Dr James Higenyi, who was then Dean of the faculty hinted me that in spite of the limitations of space and equipment, he thought the faculty had come of age, therefore, the faculty had to start a few graduate programmes in Engineering. I remember telling him that it was a brilliant idea, which in my view was long overdue. James Higenyi was one of the colleagues whose company I enjoyed. He had an easy-going personality I really liked, so we used to share jokes quite often. Apparently, by the time he revealed his ideas to me, they had already gone far with the preparations to mount a two-year course work and dissertation in Master of Engineering (MEng) degree which all the three Engineering disciplines of Civil, Electrical and Mechanical Engineering could offer. It was a professionally oriented degree and the target group was essentially engineers with working experience in the field. It was designed as a terminal degree, meaning that ordinarily, the holder of this degree would not be expected to go on to the PhD. In a way, it was similar to most MEng degrees offered by some universities in the USA. Its main thrust was upgrading and updating the technical and professional knowledge of practising engineers, with emphasis on areas relevant to the local industry. Alongside the MEng degree, the faculty also designed a Master of Science in Engineering for the more academically inclined and younger engineers. The Master of Science was also offered in all three Engineering disciplines. The aim was to prepare students who wished to pursue further studies to the doctoral degree level. The main target group was Engineering graduates, who might have no working experience, but with proven academic potential that would ordinarily qualify for the university’s staff development programme, if they possessed a first or second-class upper division honours Bachelor’s degree. In short, the MSc was more academically biased than the MEng. As luck would have it, the two degree programmes were approved before James Higenyi stepped down as Dean, or shortly thereafter. For the first time, the Faculty of Technology was offering graduate degrees in its core disciplines.

By the time I came back to Makerere in 1993, the Departments of Architecture and Surveying, which were launched during Professors Wandira and Kirya’s administrations – both offshoots of the Department of Civil Engineering – were now well established departments in the faculty. Against all odds, the
The young Department of Architecture achieved an incredible feat in 1999 when it was accredited by the Commonwealth Association of Architects, making its degrees in Architecture recognisable by the Royal Institute of British Architects, an achievement bestowed on very few schools of Architecture outside the UK. However, like the Engineering Departments, none of them was running a graduate programme. In 2001, the Department of Architecture took a bold step and introduced a Master of Architecture degree programme, initially offered in the evenings. The new programme was also a combination of course work and dissertation. In addition, the department was instrumental in the designing and teaching of an interesting joint Master of Architecture degree involving several universities in the East and Southern Africa region, appropriately dubbed the “bandwagon march.”

Besides Makerere University, the other universities participating in the programme were the Universities of Nairobi, Zimbabwe, Cape Town and Dar es Salaam. The novelty of the programme lay in the fact that, while students registered at their home universities where they also received their degrees at the end of the course, they were required to take modules offered by all universities participating in the programme and pass them. The modules offered at each university depended on the university’s assessed strength. In effect, students hopped from one university to another until the rotation was complete. At Makerere, the word “bandwagon” connoted the umbrella times of short-lived President Godfrey Binaisa. We were accustomed to the use of the word “bandwagon” in a colloquial and political sense. This was the first time I had heard it applied to an academic programme. The funding which came from NORAD guaranteed the success of the programme. Additionally, the fact that our young Department of Architecture was able to participate in a trans-regional programme of this nature so effectively was reason enough to celebrate. At last, Dr Banabas Nawangwe’s hard work was paying off. Dr Nawangwe was the founding head of the Department of Architecture at Makerere and, rightly so, his colleagues in the faculty recognised his excellent leadership qualities and elected him Dean of the Faculty of Technology in 2003, the first non-engineer to head the Faculty of Technology. He had taken over from Dr Badru Kiggundu, a USA trained civil engineer with a PhD. At last, the faculty was making good progress to the extent that even we in the university administration were equally impressed by the turnaround the faculty had registered in a relatively short time.

Dr Kiggundu had returned from America where he had spent many years as a student and joined the acutely under-staffed Department of Civil Engineering when I was still at Kyambogo in the early 1990s. Those were the days when civil engineers were in extremely high demand in Uganda. Then the country was going through an unprecedented construction boom and the construction companies needed every civil engineer they could find. The department had a hard time
recruiting and retaining staff. Even its longest serving head, Engineer Senfuma, had left to set up a consultancy company of his own. However, Dr Kiggundu’s leadership ability was evident quite early. When the time came to elect a new head, his colleagues decided to entrust the leadership of their struggling department to him. In a relatively short time, Kiggundu had managed to recruit a few more members of staff. Those who had joined the department as teaching assistants started moving up. Other members of staff with the necessary requirements were gaining promotion to higher academic ranks within the department. In due course, Dr Kiggundu too was promoted to the deserved rank of Associate Professor of Civil Engineering. Interestingly, the Department of Civil Engineering was fortunate to have had the first female member of staff, Dr Maimuna Nalubega. She too had risen through the ranks during Kiggundu’s time. She had gone on to do a PhD at the Institute for Hydraulic and Environmental Engineering based in Delft, The Netherlands. When she returned in 2003, a World Bank-funded project was looking for a well-qualified engineer. Fortunately for her and unfortunately for us, she was the World Bank’s choice, although we regarded her as a role model for encouraging girls to choose Engineering careers, hitherto considered a male reserve. She however left on the understanding that in her spare time, she would continue helping the department with its graduate programmes and supervising PhD students.

Besides Kiggundu and Nalubega, the Department of Civil Engineering, which was on the brink of closure because of staff shortage, was now boasting of a strong staff force. Among the new faces were Dr Ngirane-Katashaya at the rank of Associate Professor; Dr Tony Kerali, an old student of the department who, after graduation in the late 1970s worked with the university’s Estates and Works Department. He had been acting as University Engineer for some time and a beneficiary of the European Union’s Human Resources Development Programme at Makerere, which began in the late 1980s. After taking an MSc in Construction Management, he had gone on to take a PhD at the University of Warwick in the UK and, on return to Makerere, he decided to return to his old department as a lecturer. Dr Apolo Musoke (now deceased), one of the pioneer students when the department opened in 1970 had also come back from the University of Nairobi where he had been before going to Italy for his PhD. Unfortunately, we lost him after a protracted illness. Other new colleagues I do recall joining or re-joining the department included Engineer Mujagumbya, a passionate Rotarian and one of the few members of staff hailing from the Ssese Islands of Lake Victoria. Dr Kiggundu had also once identified a brilliant young man by the name of Tindiwensi, who had a first class. After his MSc at the University of Reading in the UK, Kiggundu was able to secure a PhD scholarship for him under the collaborative linkage between Makerere University and the Norwegian Institute of Technology, University of Trondheim, which later became the Norwegian University of Science and Technology. After his PhD at the University of Leeds
in the UK, the young man found the temptation of a lucrative lecturing job at one of the British universities hard to resist. Despite his good intentions and promises to keep coming back during his vacations to teach a few courses, we had to admit that he was one of the brains we had lost to the developed world. There was also the young Engineer Rugumayo, the son of Professor Edward Rugumayo who was chairman of the National Consultative Council during the UNLF days and later became Uganda’s Ambassador to South Africa and a senior Minister in President Museveni’s Government. The young Rugumayo was then in charge of the Project Implementation Unit of the Ministry of Education and Sports, but was able to teach part-time in the department and supervise students’ projects. The department was once again ticking. Dr N girane-Katushaya went on to become one of the two Deputy Deans when Kiggundu was Dean.

The Department of Electrical Engineering too was celebrating the achievements of Dorothy Kabagaaju, the first female in the department to obtain a first class honours BSc degree in Electrical Engineering at Makerere, and who had also gone further to obtain a Masters degree in the USA and a PhD at McGill University in Montreal, Canada. There is an old saying, “like father like son”; but in the case of Dorothy, it was a case of “like father like daughter” and “like mother like daughter”. Dorothy’s father, Professor Patrick Rubaihayo of the Department of Crop Science, is a brilliant geneticist and a successful plant breeder. He had pioneered the introduction and application of the Science of Biotechnology at Makerere and in Uganda. He had done a lot of research on bananas. In fact, I have some of Professor Rubaihayo’s improved banana cultivars in my banana garden. Her mother, Elizabeth Rubaihayo (now deceased) was also a successful plant breeder at Kawanda Research Institute, where she worked as a research scientist and Director of the institute for many years. Her greatest achievement as a crop breeder was the Kawanda Composite, an extremely high yielding maize variety. Most of the maize varieties introduced later were essentially improvements on her composite. I was privileged, though remotely, to have helped Dorothy polish her A-level Chemistry when she was at high school during my moonlighting days. The department had been fortunate to have had her among its rank and file.

When James Higenyi’s term expired, the faculty once again faced the challenge of identifying a person with the kind of leadership qualities required of a Dean. There were several potential candidates, but Dr Kiggundu emerged the most popular choice. Understandably so, Kiggundu was reluctant to accept the deanship, arguing that he had a lot of unfinished business in the department where he was serving as head. He wanted to continue building up the department until his term expired. However, a bit of persuasion did the trick. In addition, the fact that Dr Jackson Mwakali, who was replacing him as Head of Department, was equally competent allayed his worst fears. So, he accepted the new challenge. Dr Badru Kiggundu took over from another US-trained mechanical engineer
with a PhD, James Higenyi, one of the longest serving Faculty of Technology Deans. Although Dr Kiggundu's deanship did not last long, cut short by his appointment as the Chairman of Uganda's Electoral Commission, he clearly demonstrated that he was indeed a capable leader, even within that short space of time.

Besides consolidating what his predecessor had started, Dr Kiggundu initiated new and interesting developments. The most notable was the Appropriate Technology Centre, appropriately built with low-cost interlocking bricks developed by Dr Moses Musaazi of the Department of Electrical Engineering, who also served as its first Director. The aim of building the Centre was to identify and develop innovative appropriate technologies applicable to the African situation. In fact, Dr Musaazi has been the brain behind most of the appropriate technology initiatives in the faculty. In essence, the idea behind those initiatives was to help improve the living standards of the rural communities, using low cost technology. Kiggundu had proved to be a good team builder and during his time, the faculty received funding from Sida/SAREC of Sweden to support research and PhD training. Badru Kiggundu was one of the Makerere people in the programme, who was also instrumental in the establishment of what turned out to be a very productive collaborative linkage between the Faculty of Technology and the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm, Sweden. It was sad to see him go, but like Dr Nalubega, he too promised to continue supervising his PhD students.

When Badru Kiggundu left for a new job as Chairman of the Electoral Commission, the immediate task was not only to find a suitable replacement, but also to ensure that the momentum for change and innovation, which had begun under him and earlier under James Higenyi, was sustained. For once since its inception in 1970, the faculty decided to choose a non-engineer as Kiggundu's replacement. In 2003, Dr Barnabas Nawangwe, an architect, was unanimously elected as the new Dean of Technology. Although a lot had been done by his predecessors in an effort to revitalise the faculty, a lot still remained to be done. The new Dean was, therefore, starting the term with a plate full of problems to fix – the most nagging among which was space and equipment.

Africa suffers from a serious shortage of skilled professionals in the key technical fields like Engineering. To aggravate the bad situation further, the capacity to train these professionals at local universities faces severe limitations. Technical disciplines like Engineering are naturally expensive, mainly on the account of the costly inputs they require. Moreover, given the level of funding most African public universities get from their national governments, few universities in sub-Saharan Africa, perhaps with the exception of South Africa, are able to train technical professionals like engineers to the highest standards possible – standards that many employers and professional bodies demand – simply because the necessary inputs are missing. Most of the equipment in the majority of African
universities is either broken down or obsolete. As an example, imagine a student of Electrical Engineering working with an old analogue cathode ray oscilloscope in the age of digital circuitry. Borrowing a leaf from one of my professors during my undergraduate days at Makerere used the expression “as every school boy knows” quite frequently. I want to borrow a leaf from him and say the same thing here; that as “every school boy knows, a university can have the brightest and best qualified Engineering professors, but without the right supporting infrastructure, at best they can only teach excellent theory”.

Technical disciplines, being practical oriented, requires a good balance of both theory and practice for the benefit of the students. As Vice Chancellor, I learnt from first-hand experience how frustrating it was to find money to buy new equipment and consumables for the Faculty of Technology. Looking for money in a situation where Government did not provide for a meaningful capital budget made the task much harder. However, some relief came with the introduction of the Private Student Scheme. From time to time, we could make some savings with which it was possible to buy a few pieces of equipment. But the money from this source was so small that most of the costly equipment was out of reach. Donors used to chip in too, but it was never enough. Still, we could not afford all the expensive equipment needed for good research and teaching. Certainly, Barnabas Nawangwe was quite familiar with the problems of a poorly resourced faculty. He also knew that the problem of poorly equipped laboratories and inadequate space for teaching and offices had no quick solutions. However, the big asset the new Dean inherited was the high quality of staff. Through vigorous staff development over the years, the Faculty of Technology was able to build up a superb staff in most of the disciplines. Later, we shall see how the new Dean tried to address the problem of space and equipment.

As we grappled with the problem of equipment and space, it was sad to see some of the best trained staff leave the faculty. The Department of Electrical Engineering came off worst, as both young and old members of staff started leaving for better paying jobs. The new telecommunication companies were relentlessly recruiting good electrical engineers. Since these companies offered better and far more competitive salaries than Makerere, they had no problem luring away our staff. While the younger staff members were leaving the department, some senior ones too were edging out. Dr Vincent Kasangaki, an old timer who had weathered the storms of the bad times, save for a stint at Boston, USA for his PhD and who had risen to the rank of Associate Professor was among the senior staff I was so sad to see leave. The Uganda Communication Commission appointed him Principal of its institute at Nakawa. I was helpless to stop him, for the simple fact that in terms of competitive salaries, the university fared badly. I guess he was one of the people getting tired of voluntarism. However, to be fair to him, he had made his contribution and perhaps it was the right time for him to move
on. As the staff numbers nose-dived, Dr Eriab Lugujjo, another veteran who had returned to Makerere in the 1970s with a PhD from the California Institute of Technology, and was now Head of Department, was constantly reminding me about the deteriorating staffing situation in his department. The department was on the verge of closing. I could only console him by assuring him that I was aware of the problem and I was doing everything possible to find a solution. In the interim, I kept asking him to look for part-time lecturers. I remember making a report to the Appointments Board about the poor staffing situation in Electrical Engineering. One member of the Board who was once a Head of Department in the same faculty assured me that what was happening in the Department of Electrical Engineering was a passing phase, and that there was no cause for alarm. Sooner than later, the market would be saturated and the exodus would come to an end. He had seen the same thing happen in Civil Engineering some years before. It turned out that in the interim, the solution was to recruit more part-time staff, if he could find the suitable people. As luck would have it, when Ing Kaluuba was Head of Department, we had recruited a Brazilian Electrical Engineer, Dr De Silva, a specialist in Power Engineering. He was a badly needed relief. In addition, there were still some strong pillars left: Eriab Lugujjo, Moses Musaazi, Ing Kaluuba, Dan Nsubuga-Mubiru, P. Mugisha and T. Wanyama, to mention a few. The department limped on with younger members of staff under training.

Shortly before I left Makerere, the faculty launched a series of new undergraduate programmes in Quantity Surveying, Telecommunications Engineering, Land Economics and Construction Management. Since the collapse of the University of East Africa in 1970, Uganda had no local institution training professionals in these specialised technical fields, yet the demand for them was steadily growing. The university had to respond to this demand. With the coming of the cellular phone companies and Internet service providers in the country in the mid-1990s, telecommunication was a rapidly growing industry in Uganda, which required well-trained telecommunication engineers. The first admission to the new programmes commenced in the 2004/05 academic year.

Faculty of Agriculture – Championing Uganda’s Green Revolution

What was the link between the Faculty of Agriculture and the Faculty of Technology at Makerere? The answer is the Department of Agricultural Engineering. Although the department had been in existence long before the Faculty of Technology, the two had never run a joint programme. The first attempt to connect the Department of Agricultural Engineering and the Faculty of Technology was in the late 1970s. Professor John Mugerwa (now deceased), then Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry, took an unusual step. He decided to recruit a few young and brilliant engineers, mainly mechanical
engineers who had just graduated from the Faculty of Technology, to beef up the staff of the Department of Agricultural Engineering. It was unusual at the time, but it was a brilliant innovation. Agricultural Engineering had advanced to a level that required specialists in machinery and Water Engineering, among others. After the departure of legends such as Professor Boschoff and other expatriates in the staff exodus of 1972-73, the Department of Agricultural Engineering lost almost all its senior academic staff. It was left to Dr Ouma, Dr Hudson Rugumayo (now deceased), Ing Kayima, who had trained at the Technion in Israel, Zachary Olum and one or two others, all still in junior positions to hold the fort. Later, Levi Kasisira joined them. These young men kept the department afloat.

Unfortunately, Kayima left to start his own business, Ouma died and Zachary Olum joined politics. Once again, members of staff in the Department of Agricultural Engineering were on their way down. Professor Mugerwa had to come up with innovative ways of rescuing the department from imminent closure. Dr Josephat Sentongo Kibalama, (now deceased) was one of the young engineers who crossed over from Technology to Agriculture. He joined the Department of Agricultural Engineering as a Special Assistant and, true to Professor Mugerwa’s promise, a scholarship was found for him to pursue a Masters degree in Australia. In a way, the Masters degree was also a conversion course for him from mainstream Mechanical Engineering to Agricultural Engineering. Unlike some of his colleagues who went abroad to study on scholarships the university had solicited for them and never came back, Sentongo Kibalama returned to Makerere and served as a lecturer. A few years later, he was on his way again, this time to the Ohio State University in the USA for a PhD in Farm Power. He had no difficulty completing his degree on time. Like the first time, as soon as he completed his PhD, he was home bound and back to his adopted department. That was extraordinary patriotism in extraordinary circumstances! After the PhD, he had every conceivable opportunity to stay there and live a comfortable life as many had done. Instead, he chose home and home is where he died a few years later in the prime of his life. It was a big loss to his department and to the university as a whole. In his relatively short life, he had proved himself an asset to the university.

While Sentongo Kibalama was studying in the USA, his former colleague and Head of Department, Dr Hudson Rugumayo, died. After Rugumayo’s death, Levi Kasisira took over as Head of Department, but only in an acting capacity, because at the time he was not yet a Senior Lecturer. Fortunately, by the time Sentongo Kibalama returned from the USA, he had accumulated enough publications to qualify for promotion to Senior Lecturer. Following his promotion, and to allow Levi Kasisira to go for his PhD at University of Pretoria in South Africa, he took over the headship of the department, first in an acting capacity until he was later confirmed by the Appointments Board as substantive Head of the Department. As if he was remembering his roots in the Faculty of Technology, he introduced
new reforms in the undergraduate curriculum which, among other things, required students of Agricultural Engineering to spend part of the first two years in the Faculty of Technology. At the same time, the department introduced a full-blown four-year BSc degree programme in Agricultural Engineering, one of the new degree programmes in the Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry for many years. Until then, Agricultural Engineering had been studied as one of the components of the BSc degree in Agriculture. Besides re-organising the curriculum and course structure, Dr Kibalama spent a great deal of his time on staff recruitment and development. He recruited most of the young staff now running the department.

Besides devoting most of his time on his academic and administrative responsibilities, Dr Kibalama had a rare sense of concern for his colleagues and their welfare. As a representative of the academic staff on the University Council, he introduced several imaginative schemes to help staff make a meaningful career in an institution which lacked resources to pay its staff decent wages. One such scheme was an overdraft facility arranged with the defunct Uganda Commercial Bank, where Makerere University staff could access funds on easy terms. He negotiated the facility together with the university administration. It was open to all university employees, regardless of rank and position, but the size of the overdraft depended on one's salary. For example, whereas the Vice Chancellor was eligible for an overdraft facility of up to six million shillings (the equivalent of some three thousand dollars at a time), a tea girl could only overdraw her account up to a maximum of three hundred thousand shillings (the equivalent of about two hundred dollars). The collateral was a university's guarantee that it would continue to credit the borrower's salary into his or her account in the Bank. In other words, only those university employees with accounts at the Uganda Commercial Bank, Makerere University Branch, qualified for the overdraft facility. Soon, other banks in town were emulating this innovative scheme.

The scheme came in handy and helped many members of staff, including me, weather some severe financial storms. In fact, several members of staff used the facility to build their own houses and pay their children's school fees on time. The scheme had no limit on the number of times one could borrow. As soon as you cleared the last overdraft, you were free to take another. The bank had no difficulty recovering its money, because the university underwrote the facility. Sadly, as I later learnt, Dr Kibalama never made much use of the scheme he brokered. Perhaps, he was too busy helping others and forgot about himself! Besides serving as Head of Department, his colleagues elected him the second Deputy Dean of the faculty, a position he held until his untimely death from cardio complications in November 2003.

The Agricultural Science Department was initially small and shoved into the Faculty of Science until visionary and energetic Professor Fergus Brunswick
Wilson turned it into a full-fledged and respectable Faculty of Agriculture in 1952 and in the process, became its first Dean. The new faculty started teaching courses leading to a BSc degree in Agriculture of the University of London. In the same year, the faculty acquired a 330 acre run down farm at Kabanyolo, next to Gayaza High School, some 13 kilometres north of Kampala, from a retired Russian tin miner who had bought it from a company called Mengo Planters. As a young man, my father worked for this company in the 1920s before he left for Nairobi to join the East African Railways. Professor Wilson personally negotiated the purchase of the farm and turned it into a modern university teaching farm. Besides teaching Agriculture, Professor Wilson indulged in many pastime pursuits, one of which was tree planting. He planted the famous Pitanga Cherry hedge that graces the front of the university’s Main Building, the seat of the university administration. He also planted many trees and some of them can still be seen all over the university campus at Makerere today. He is also credited for having successfully lobbied the three respective Governors of the East African countries of Kenya, Tanganyika and Uganda to provide funds for a modern building for the Faculty of Agriculture, which was opened by the Queen Mother in 1958. That building is the current Faculty of Agriculture housing the offices of the Dean. The extension at the back came later. Initially, Agricultural Science was offered as a certificate course and later upgraded to a diploma, until it became one of the few professional courses at Makerere that was offered as a degree programme of the University of London, under Professor Wilson.

As I have pointed out before, Makerere has over the years produced several generations of excellent agriculturists, who have gone on to serve as research scientists and agricultural officers, while others branched out into other fields where they equally made successful careers. However, the persistent criticism that the faculty had failed to produce professional farmers, or people with the technical and managerial expertise to start up agro-processing industries, remained a serious concern which had to be addressed. The critics were always quick to point out that, despite the scores of agriculturalists coming out of the Faculty of Agriculture at Makerere every year, Uganda continued to export unprocessed agricultural commodities, such as coffee, with no value addition. Country-wide, the majority of farmers were still practising subsistence farming. President Museveni too expressed similar sentiments. His concern was that he saw very few, if any at all, full-time farmers with degrees in Agriculture, while there were numerous subsistence farmers working on disorganised little farms. That criticism notwithstanding, many people were happy with the faculty’s research in new breeds of crops and livestock. Farmers had come to recognise the value of the research done at Makerere and in the national agricultural research institutes, which provided them with high yielding, disease resistant varieties of crops and breeds of animal, as well as good crop and animal husbandry practices. Therefore, the challenge the faculty faced was how to strike a good balance between the
practice of Agriculture as a science on one hand, and as a profitable business on the other. As a science, the faculty had by all standards excelled, but as a profitable business from which people could derive not only livelihoods, but also wealth, a lot of hard work still lay ahead.

President Museveni personally took up the issue of value-added agriculture when he advised the university to initiate a new degree programme in Food Science and Agricultural Processing in the late 1980s. In fact, the idea of setting up an institute that would train food scientists and technologists was first mooted in the 1960s, but when the country fell on hard times, the idea died a natural death. However, it was resurrected in the 1980s. So, in 1989, the Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry opened a Department of Food Science and Technology, thus becoming the seventh department in the faculty. Dr David Mudduuli, a trained nutritionist with a Canadian PhD was its founding head. When he left for a new assignment as Director-General of the Djibouti-based Inter-Government Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD), Dr Joyce Kikafunda took over the reins as the next Head of Department. Joyce was another nutritionist who had obtained a PhD from the University of Reading in the United Kingdom after a brilliant undergraduate study at Makerere crowned with a first class honours BSc degree in Agriculture. The new department had a big mandate, which included the training of professionals with the capacity to develop and manage a modern value-added food industry in Uganda and conduct research in Food Science, Technology and Human Nutrition. The other part of its mandate was product development and technology transfer, as part of the Ugandan Government’s efforts to modernise agriculture. As would be expected, the department had a rough start. It had neither office space nor laboratories of its own. Well-trained staff in the disciplines of Food Science and Technology was also scarce. In fact, the new department depended a lot on the goodwill of the faculty dean and other departments within the faculty in its formative years for office space, laboratories and lecture rooms. However, as we shall see later, a determined and visionary leadership and a dose of perseverance on the part of the staff and successive generations of students eventually paid off. Since the shaky early beginnings, the department continued to grow in leaps and bounds. It has made some giant strides.

Thanks to the generosity of NORAD, in 2005, almost a year after I had retired, the young department finally moved into its long awaited brand new, modern and beautiful building on Observatory Hill, overlooking the Faculty of Technology. The new building has well-equipped laboratories for proximate analysis and food microbiology. In fact, I remember during the planning phase, Dr Serunjogi who coordinated the planning and construction of the new building on behalf of the department always reminded us that it was important for it to have at least one laboratory in the new building that met the requirement of ISO 920 certification. Because initially the funds in the NORAD grant for the department were insufficient for constructing and equipping the new building, the architects
– NOPLAN – had a tough time coming up with a design commensurate with the money available. Dr Joyce Kikafunda and her colleagues did a lot of juggling to ensure the money would cover both the building and the pilot plants. At some point, we almost dropped the conference hall. Fortunately, when NORAD released the NOK10 million unallocated funds, the Department of Food Science and Technology was one of the biggest beneficiaries of that money. With the additional money, the building could go ahead as planned. We were also fortunate to have hired a good but relatively inexpensive contractor, Eastern Builders. It was all smiles when Ambassador Gjos Tore broke the ground in 2004 and construction began. Since the building was located on a slope, I was worried that most of the money would go into levelling. Luckily my worst fears were allayed by what happened later. I feel proud every time I look at this beautiful building gracing the western side of the Observatory Hill, thanks to my colleague Professor Epelu Opio who, as chair of the Space Allocation Committee, identified the location for the building. But even before it moved into its new home, which is a little farther away from the Faculty of Agriculture, the department had sufficiently matured. Its research output had become something to be proud of, most of it focusing on local agro-processing and food industry, with emphasis on value addition. I recall, on several occasions, being invited to open short courses in dairy technology and dairy products, which the department and faculty used to conduct from time to time in conjunction with experts from Israel and other countries. Farmers and food processors used to patronise these extensive courses at their own cost. In fact, in its relatively short existence, the department had attracted an array of national and international benefactors, including the Nestle Foundation, one of Makerere’s new development partners. After a competitive selection process in 1996, it qualified for a UNESCO chair in Post-harvest Technology. During my time, the chair was occupied consecutively by two professors: Paul Hansen from Ohio State University in the USA and Peter Flowers from the UK. I also remember going out of my way to find some money from the university's endowment fund in London, which at the time was managed by Crown Agent, to assist the department to purchase some modern equipment.

Whether by commission or coincidence, it is an interesting fact that, like Makerere College, the predecessor of Makerere University, which opened with fourteen students and five instructors, the Department of Food Science and Technology also opened its doors in 1989 with fourteen undergraduate students and five academic staff. At the end of their four-year course, four of the pioneer graduates joined the teaching staff of the department. By the time I left the university in 2004, it had on its nominal roll over 100 students and the teaching staff had grown from five to fifteen, eight of them PhD holders. When I was still at the Chemistry Department as Head, I remember losing one of my good technicians, Ben Sentoongo, to the new department. It was all in good faith, because we were all trying to lend a hand to the young department. When all is said and
done, the pleasure one derives from this tremendous effort is the important fact that most of the department’s graduates have readily found employment as food scientists, food technologists and nutritionists, among others who are in food-related industries. Some have opened up their own agro-processing industries and in turn have provided employment for their fellow graduates.

When President Museveni was still Makerere’s sitting Chancellor, he had made employment and job creation a personal crusade at every graduation ceremony. He spent a lot of time driving the point home that students should always choose courses that were marketable or courses that would lead to self-employment. Food Science and Technology was, at least in a small but significant way, providing a solution to the growing problem of graduate unemployment. Unlike some of the new departments that pre-dated it but which unfortunately remained stunted, Food Science and Technology kept growing in leaps and bounds. In 1998, it launched its first graduate degree, a two-year Master of Science in Food Science and Technology, followed by a Master of Science in Applied Human Nutrition which was launched in 2003.

The department was not only preoccupied with teaching and research, it was also actively engaged in product development. However, the absence of pilot plants slowed progress. We had made attempts to secure access to the facilities based at the Uganda Industrial Research Institute at Nakawa, which at the time were lying redundant, but ended in failure as the responsible Ministry would not let go. However, through some arrangements with the Director of the Institute, Dr Charles Kwegasa, the department could use some of the institute’s facilities like the meat processing technology unit. In spite of this setback, the department was able to continue developing several food products, using whatever equipment they had. For example, Dr William Kyamuhangire, with a first degree in Industrial Chemistry and a PhD in Food Engineering from the Norwegian University of Agriculture, received a patent for a local root liquor he developed. At the time, Makerere University did not have many patent holders in its academic ranks, so Kyamuhangire’s patent was an achievement worth celebrating. In 2003, the Social Services Committee of the Parliament of Uganda conducted an on-the-spot tour of the University and one of highlights I recall about the tour in the Faculty of Agriculture was the excitement Dr Kyamuhangire’s invention stirred up when some of the honourable members of the august body – the Parliament of Uganda – decided to taste the dark black liquor. I guess they did so to prove for themselves that the stuff was really worth the patent. The verdict? Well, after a few sips, several of them wanted to know if Dr Kyamuhangire had anything for sale. William Kyamuhangire pulled a few bottles out of his lockers and made some instant cash from the MPs. It was a happy ending to a tour that had begun on a rough note, as many MPs went away with bottles of the made-in-Makerere stuff.
My intelligence sources told me that the MPs’ Makerere Tour was prompted by the misinformation and negative reports some ill-intentioned people had filed to Parliament about the university. One of the serious allegations was that Makerere academic staff, and the Faculty of Agriculture in particular, hardly conducted research evidenced by the absence of publications. I guess the Committee wanted to verify first-hand if there was any truth in the allegations. As the MPs discovered for themselves, it turned out that, contrary to the reports, they found a vibrant university, busy with research, teaching and publishing, with most of the publications in some of the top international journals. Some members of staff were also trying to patent their inventions and discoveries. William Kyamuhangire’s patent was one of the smoking guns that research was alive and well at Makerere, despite poor funding. To crown it all, the rapid development of the Department of Food Science and Technology was a delight, not only to the Faculty of Agriculture and university, but also to Makerere’s former Chancellor, President Yoweri Museveni who initiated the idea of setting it up in the first place. However, most of the credit goes to Professor Elly Sabiti who was Dean of the faculty for eight productive years. During his tenure, he gave the young department the encouragement it so badly needed at the time. Also credit worthy is his predecessor, the late Professor John Mugerwa, from whom Elly Sabiti took over the faculty in its formative years. Dr David Muduuli, as the founding Head of Department, cut the sod and laid a solid foundation for it. He was the spark that ignited the unstoppable fire. In addition, credit also goes to its longest serving head, Dr Joyce Kikafunda, and staff.

By opening a Department of Food Science and Technology, the Faculty of Agriculture, in an indirect way, was answering some of the constant criticisms that it had failed to make a significant impact on Uganda’s farming community. Unfortunately, this act alone was not enough to address all criticisms; it had to do more. For example, there were many who believed that the curriculum needed further reforms if the critics were ever to be silenced. A significant development in that direction, which incidentally arose out of the collaboration between the faculty and the National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO), was the establishment of the Continuing Agricultural Education Centre (CAEC) at Kabanyolo, opened in 2002. The facility was built with funds provided by the Government of Uganda from a loan borrowed from the World Bank for the Agricultural Research and Training Programme (ARTP as it was popularly known). It was a sort of follow-up to the Manpower for Agricultural Development (MFAD) funded by the USAID for over ten years. The new centre was set up to provide in-service training through short courses, for practising farmers, extension workers and farm managers, among others. The participants were expected to go away after the training, equipped with new farming techniques, farm management skills and marketing strategies. In effect, CAEC started as a unique experiment aimed at bringing the faculty and the farming community closer. Professor Elly
Sabiiti, who was Dean of the faculty at the time spearheaded its implementation but, along the way, he experienced some setbacks which almost derailed the entire project. In an attempt to get the project to start on time, he overlooked some university procedural requirements, an act which did not augur well with some of my senior colleagues in the university administration who were ever mindful of university rules and procedures. However, the temporary setback did not dampen his enthusiasm for the project and, with a little help and encouragement from some of us, the project was soon back on track. Professor Joseph Mukiibi, then Director General of NARO, ensured the project was not starved of funds. The product was a beautiful complex of modern buildings on the Gayaza High School side of Kabanyolo Agricultural Research Institute. The Sasakawa project with similar objectives also moved into the new centre. Unfortunately, during one of the violent seasonal storms that hit Kabanyolo, wind blew off the roofs of some of the new buildings, which necessitated replacing at an extra cost.

Even with the CAEC and other innovative interventions in place, there was still a missing link. Agreed that some farmers could pay and attend a course or two at the CAEC, but the bulk of Uganda’s farmers were still in a peasantry state and their farms, if you could call them so, with very smallholdings – a hectare or much less. They cannot afford the fees CAEC charges per course, let alone follow the language of instruction. However, these are the very farmers on whom the country relies to produce food for all Ugandans and also produce the cash crops that earn Uganda hard currency. These are the farmers who need help the most, because of the teething problems they have to deal with daily. Given its wealth of professional expertise, the university was well placed to solve most of their problems. The question was how do you reach such farmers who are scattered all over the place and how do you help them maximise crop yields on their small holdings and, in the process, ameliorate their abject poverty through improved farming techniques? Fortunately, the faculty did not have to look far. The answer was: train more extension workers who would act as change agents in the communities. Also, ensure that the training of the extension students took into account the rural setting where the majority of them were due to work after completing their degrees. It was a recognised fact that the weakest link between the research and training institutions on the one hand and the farmers on the other was extension service. If you could strengthen this link, then you would have succeeded in transforming agriculture for the better; at least that was the theory which had to be put to the test.

The CAEC came much later after the faculty had opened its eighth department – the Department of Agricultural Extension Education – in 1991. Later, the CAEC became its continuing education arm. The new department and CAEC was the faculty’s answer to the question of its relevance to the farming community. Dr Arsen Semaana, who started the department as its founding head, came to the university
from Uganda’s Ministry of Agriculture, with a wealth of experience in agricultural extension work. As would be expected, it took a lot of hard work and outright old-fashioned luck to start a department and a new degree programme from scratch and succeed. Dr Semana and a few colleagues had worked very hard to get the new department off the ground. In time, their hard work paid off. The university approved a three-year Bachelor of Agricultural Extension Education in 1992/93. The main objective of the new degree was to update and equip practising non-graduate extension workers with Diplomas in Agriculture, with recent advances in agricultural extension methods, including soft skills like communication and mobilisation skills, as well as practical problem-solving skills.

The new department’s other role was as an avenue through which the Faculty of Agriculture would reach out to farmers and, in so doing, contribute to grassroots development through responsive and farmer-centred extension education programmes. Besides recruiting staff, Dr Semaana’s other job as Head of Department was to look for students with Diplomas and relevant field experience who needed to update and scale up their skills. To find them, he went at great length to convince the District officials of the importance of the new degree programme and why they should not only send their non-degree holder extension workers to Makerere, but also sponsor them for the retraining. By and large, he succeeded. Most Districts he approached seized the opportunity and sent their extension workers for degree training. I believe that one aspect of the new degree that was key in persuading the District authorities to sponsor their staff was the fact that a large proportion of the training was field-based. Students had to work closely with the farmers and provide them with solutions to their problems. The idea seemed to be working as was planned. The ivory tower was slowly reaching out to the communities.

A logical follow up to the successful undergraduate programme, coupled with improved staffing, prompted Dr Semaana’s department to mount the Master of Science in Agricultural Extension and Education. Besides the theory-based lectures, students on the Masters programme had to undertake rural-based projects in a rural setting. I recall Dr Semaana inviting me to visit Namavundu village near Kabanyolo which was one of the sites for the MSc Extension Education students’ rural community projects. When I arrived there, I was pleasantly surprised to meet a mesmerised community. Several village residents I talked to confessed to me that they had found it hard to believe that Makerere University students could come and work with lowly educated people in a rural setting without difficulty and even provide them with practical solutions to their problems. Until our students went there, the Namavundu residents – like most Ugandans – had been under the impression that university students and graduates had nothing to do with village life or tilling the land with a hand hoe. As far as they were concerned, going to university meant an escape from undignified rural life, drudgery and a good-
bye kiss to the hoe. However, contrary to their perceptions, our MSc students had demonstrated that university students had no difficulty working with their hands. In fact, the village residents were impressed with the students’ farming knowledge and skills. For one, this was a village where the revered staple food crop, the banana (matooke) had long stopped doing well. Most farmers believed that the low productivity of their banana groves was due to soil infertility (or lunnyo as most people in Buganda referred to it). What our students did have was to demonstrate to the farmers that, although soil fertility was critically important, there were also other problems which the farmers needed to take care of and, in majority of cases, simple interventions were all that it required to solve them. The students were able to show the Namavundu farmers those simple interventions they had to implement to make their banana grow productively once again.

By applying the simple and cheap farming techniques learnt from our students, the farmers in this village began to see their favourite staple increase in yield. They had learnt the lesson that good crop husbandry practices, soil fertility management and a few other inexpensive interventions like disease control, boosted the yield of their favourite crop and other crops. They had also learnt better techniques of intercropping the bananas with other crops, a farming system widely practised in this region of the country. In the short time the students had been working in Namavundu village, farmers participating in the project had started harvesting reasonably big bunches of banana. Some hard working farmers were reporting harvest of banana bunches weighing between ten and fifteen kilogrammes from their farms, something they had long forgotten about. So, they were visibly proud of the achievement. Before our presence there, the best a farmer hoped for was a bunch weighing no more than seven kilogrammes. Many were openly grateful to me, Dr Semaana and Makerere University for making a difference in their lives and for the attitude change in general. I was equally impressed and wished we had worked a lot more with the community in such a fashion earlier. The Namavundu experiment and experience left a lasting impression on me. On my way back to the university that evening, my mind remained focused on what I had seen and heard. I kept thinking that we owed Dr Semaana and his colleagues a debt of gratitude for initiating this innovative approach to outreach programmes and community engagement. My concern however, was whether the university had the capacity to sustain these initiatives and whether it was possible to persuade more departments to emulate Semaana’s example? At the time of my retirement in 2004, the spirit of university-community engagement was still very much alive. Although Dr Semaana had stepped down as Head of Department, he had passed the mantle to Dr Margaret Najjingo Mangheni who was younger and more energetic. Through this experience, a point was once more driven home that, given a little bit of facilitation, political goodwill, visionary and imaginative leadership, African universities have enormous potential to help transform the poverty-stricken rural communities of Africa into productive and
prosperous societies, through simple but imaginative interventions. This was the surest way universities could justify the heavy investments from the state and other stakeholders. But for them to be able to play this role effectively, what universities in Africa need is a change in their mindset and social re-engineering.

Although it had not yet started churning out droves of graduate farmers, the faculty was surely making a difference in the way agriculture was practised in Uganda. For instance, as part of their course requirements, every year students of Agricultural Engineering produced working prototypes of new and appropriate farm machinery. If the prototypes could be developed further, they would go a long way in helping the peasant farmers modernise their farming practices and realise higher crop yields, thereby having more income from their small holdings. Unfortunately, these prototypes were just rusting away in the Department of Agricultural Engineering workshop and in the yard at Kabanyolo. The major drawback, as I saw it, was not lack of innovative ideas but rather the university's inability to commercialise the students' prototypes or to identify entrepreneurs willing to take them up, develop and mass-produce them under licence. My hope then was that when the Government of Uganda sets up a Technology Development Centre, the centre would take up these prototypes and develop them further to commercial level. By the time I left the university, the centre was still on paper. Perhaps it is important to remember that a country like Uganda has very few commercial farmers and even fewer are full-time farmers. Farming as an occupation is unattractive, because it calls for hard work with minimal returns, partly due to the high cost of mechanisation. A tractor is still out of the reach of the majority of farmers, so much of the farm work is back-breaking. The solution is "technology" which, unfortunately, farmers cannot afford. The Department of Agricultural Engineering had started leading the way. My regret was that we had little contact with NARO's Appropriate Technology Centre, Namalere. Perhaps that would be one way of pooling resources for research and development in the critical area of low-cost farm mechanisation.

We have seen that in spite of the importance of agriculture to the nation's economy and food security, very few people in Uganda have made farming a full-time occupation. Many practise farming as a secondary source of livelihood and peasant farming is first and foremost for subsistence; it is the little surplus, if any, that is sold as contribution to the household income. Perhaps with the exception of the sugar mill and tea estate owners, few people in Uganda think that farming can be a highly profitable business. Therefore, it does not come as a surprise that the students' attitude to a degree in Agriculture is influenced by such considerations. Students tend to look at a degree in Agriculture as simply a license to a white-collar job in some air-conditioned and cosy office in town. The Agricultural Secretariat in the Bank of Uganda used to be such an avenue to a white-collar job for graduates of Agriculture. For many students,
life on the farm was the last thing to cross their mind. As a way of changing this mindset, Professor Elly Sabiiti, as Dean of the faculty, conceived the idea that the university should acquire more land at Kabanyolo, which the faculty could use to demonstrate to the students that farming could be a serious profitable business if practised according to modern scientific and management methods. It would also be another source of revenue for the faculty and the university as a whole. Sabiiti’s argument was that by using the additional land, the faculty would be able to demonstrate what it took to profit from modern scientific farming. Fortunately, the university bought into Elly Sabiiti’s idea and, with NORAD funding, the faculty acquired about 60 acres of land at Naalyamagonja, a village on a nearby hill northeast of Kabanyolo. However, we were unable to implement Sabiiti’s ideas of turning this land into a commercial farm quickly, because the university had a severely constrained budget. So, we could not provide the faculty with start-up capital. Professor Sabiiti left office in 2003 before realising his dream, and so, the idea of a commercially run farm at Naalyamagonja remained an unfinished business, which Professor Sabiiti left for the new dean, Professor Matete Bekunda, to implement.

In a lay person’s interpretation, Agricultural Economics is a marketing tool. The discipline helps a farmer to analyse how commodity prices fluctuate at home and international markets, and the economic factors and market forces at play, which are responsible for the price variations. It helps a farmer to make sense of farming as an economic activity, to know what sells and what does not and why. From that stand-point, Agricultural Economics is an important discipline. It was also one of the disciplines in the Faculty of Agriculture that most students found attractive and appealing because, for a long time, graduates of Agricultural Economics had no difficulty securing employment. Many ended up at banks and the Agricultural Secretariat of the Bank of Uganda. For the same reasons, the department had one of the highest staff turnovers in the university. It found itself competing in the same human resources market with high-paying organisations like banks, as there was a constant high demand for well-qualified Agricultural Economists outside the university that no one seemed able to satisfy. Some senior members of staff like Dr David Kazungu left the department in December 1980 to join politics. Its long serving Head of Department, Josh Bibangamba and his colleague, Musemakweri, left to join Charles Kabugo’s Uganda Cooperative Alliance. Opio Odong, who had kept the department afloat as staff came and went, also left for a job with the UNDP. As the department grappled with the staffing instability, it had to cope with the increasing number of students who were opting to specialise in Agricultural Economics. It was a difficult balancing act, but slowly the staffing situation started to witness some improvement, which came with the change of the name of the department. I believe right from the inception of the faculty in 1952, Agricultural Economics at Makerere was taught as Rural Economy. Back then, the department was also known as the Department of Rural Economy. It
was one of the few departments in the Faculty of Agriculture that used to accept non-agricultural students from the Faculties of Arts and Social Sciences who wanted to combine Economics with Rural Economy in the 3:2:2 combinations. Over time however, the term Rural Economy was found too restrictive and an inappropriate name for the department. Some thought it was over-masking the rapidly growing discipline of Agricultural Economics. In the 1990s, the faculty decided to change the name of the department to Agricultural Economics to reflect the modern trends. Staff stability too started improving, particularly under Mrs Theodora Hyuha as Head of Department. When Mrs Hyuha decided to go for her PhD, we asked Dr Barnard Bashasha, fresh from South Korea where he had obtained his PhD, to take over the reins. Under Dr Bashasha’s leadership, more PhD holders joined the teaching staff of the department and the turnover slowed down considerably.

Inspite of all these developments, the faculty still needed a few more innovations to respond more effectively to the nagging criticism of absence of a cadre of professional farmers in the country that could turn agriculture in its various forms into successful agribusinesses. In response, the faculty launched a new degree programme in Agribusiness, at both undergraduate and graduate levels. The Bachelor of Agribusiness Management, launched in 2002, had as its main objective: to develop professionals with both theoretical and practical skills in agribusiness management and the ability to link the agricultural sector and the world of business for the purposes of commercialising Uganda’s agriculture. It was also to serve as a means of equipping students with entrepreneurial skills in agribusiness. In a duration of three years, the programme was supposed to expose students to courses in Production Economics, Farm Business Management, Agribusiness Marketing, International Agricultural Trade, Business Strategy, Small Agribusiness Management and Agribusiness Finance, among others. Before the undergraduate programme was launched, the Senate and University Council had earlier approved the Master of Agribusiness Management. Its primary objective was to impart essential management competencies required to support profitable agribusinesses in a global and highly competitive business environment. The intention was to produce graduates equipped with sound commercial orientation and high-level knowledge of the structure and technologies of agribusiness. With the introduction of these two programmes, the Department of Agricultural Economics had to think of a new name that reflected its new and expanded mandate. It therefore evolved into the Department of Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness.

No doubt, Professor Elly Sabiiti’s deanship was a very productive period for the faculty, which later became a hive of innovative ideas. Besides the new programmes in the Department of Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness, the faculty soon realised that there was the urgent need to address the issue of
sustainable agricultural land use that would ensure food security for the country in the future. The emphasis was laid on soil degradation and its management. As we have learnt from the Namavundu experience, soil fertility, which many Ugandan farmers had taken for granted for many years, had declined considerably, mainly through poor land use and mismanagement. After consulting with the relevant stakeholders, the faculty was to introduce a new three-year undergraduate degree in Agricultural Land Use and Management, for the sole purpose of training experts in this field. The rationale for the new degree was based on the fact that productive agriculture can thrive only if the soils are fertile and well managed. In fact, soil scientists at Makerere had long coined a slogan, “Soil is wealth, protect it”. The new programme was also a break with the faculty’s tradition. It was to be taught as a day and evening programme. Up until then, the Faculty of Agriculture did not offer any evening programme.

President Museveni was on record for having championed a crusade that saw several non-traditional and high value crops introduced in the country to boost and diversify its agricultural exports. The flower industry stands out as a prominent example of this effort. Under the same drive, many fruits like pineapples, mangoes and pepper, previously confined to the home market, were now being exported to the European and North American markets. The market prospects for the non-traditional crops were very promising, the more reason to increase investment in the agricultural sector. The majority of the crops in this category fell in the domain of Horticulture. The large-scale export of horticultural produce like fresh cut-flowers, vegetables, fruits and spices was a phenomenon relatively new to Uganda. Kenya had been in this business for a much longer time and far ahead of Uganda. At Makerere, aspects of Horticulture were offered within the BSc Agriculture degree programme, but not as a stand-alone specialist degree. Prior to the chaos of the 70s and 80s, Professor John Ddungu of the Department of Crop Science played a key role in promoting this discipline at Makerere. As the country went through the turbulent times, Professor Ddungu’s flower gardens at Kabanyolo were vandalised and the irrigation infrastructure destroyed. In a way, that was the end of serious flower growing at the Kabanyolo university farm. The small local flower market at that time did not provide sufficient encouragement to the faculty to consider mounting a full-fledged degree programme in Horticulture. However, as the country recovered from the chaos of military rule and the Horticulture industry started picking up, the shortage of local personnel with sufficient knowledge and skills in the field of Horticulture became evident. The problem was that Makerere University was not producing that cadre of professionals.

In response to the call to supply the emerging horticulture industry with well qualified human resources, the Faculty of Agriculture started a three-year specialist BSc degree in Horticulture in the 2000/2001 academic year. At
the time, the young industry was relying on experts from Kenya, Europe and elsewhere. The new programme’s main objective was to impart knowledge and to develop management competences required by people working, intending to work or desiring to gain expertise in the horticultural industry. In addition, the faculty wanted to help the industry expand flower, fruit and vegetable production in the country which stood at only about 2 per cent of the total cultivated land countrywide. Flower cultivation in Uganda was then just 0.0005 per cent of the total land under cultivation. In terms of exports, Horticulture contributed 5 per cent of the foreign earnings in the 1999/2000 financial year. The faculty believed that through well-trained human resources, research planning and good management, the horticultural sector could contribute as much as 20 per cent of the total export earnings. By the time the students were ready to graduate, they would have gained sufficient hands-on experience in all aspects production, management, quality control and marketing.

The fish export industry too has become a significant contributor to Uganda’s economy but, like the horticultural sector, it too required well-trained local experts in fish production, processing, handling, quality assurance, management and marketing. At the time, the bulk of the fish exported abroad was caught in the wild Lake Victoria, the second largest fresh-water lake in the world after Lake Superior in Canada. Lake Victoria was Uganda’s most important source of fish for the export market. On the other end of the scale, it was a well-documented fact that indiscriminate large-scale fishing was depleting fish stocks in the country’s lakes. To ensure that the country had sufficient fish stocks to meet its export obligations, it was not only imperative to manage the dwindling stocks efficiently, but also important to encouraging fish farming. Over the years, many Ugandans had taken to fish farming with varying degrees of success. The near-marginal performance the fish-farming industry has experienced over the years could be attributed, at least in part, to the absence of well-trained personnel in aquaculture and related disciplines. The National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO) had a small core of experts in aquaculture, most of them based at Kajjansi along the Kampala-Entebbe Highway and at the Fisheries Research Institute at Jinja. Many aquaculturists working for NARO had started out as zoologists or agriculturalists specialising in Animal Science or some other biological disciplines, but later switched to Fishery. The aquaculture extension workers the country had were too few to make an impact. This was enough reason for the Faculty of Agriculture to launch a degree programme in Aquaculture, to train experts in order to improve fish production in fishponds and to assist the Fisheries Department to better manage the wild fish stocks in the country’s numerous lakes.

The new degree programme in Fisheries and Aquaculture presented some unprecedented but interesting challenges. As it turned out, teaching Aquaculture in the most efficient way called for a multidisciplinary approach. There were
disease, health and hygiene aspects, which fell under the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine. The Faculty of Science best handled the biological aspects, like genetics of fish breeding and fish ecology. Fish husbandry and economics were within the mandate of the Faculty of Agriculture and were best handled there. Therefore, the new BSc degree in Aquaculture required the three faculties to come together and work out the modalities of running and managing a complex inter-faculty degree programme. As far as I could recall, faculties at Makerere had never been called upon to collaborate to this extent or to run a joint degree programme in this fashion before. The closest they ever got to doing so was with programmes one faculty serviced on behalf of another faculty. For example, the Faculty of Economics and Management Services ran several programmes in other faculties, such as Science, Education, Arts and Social Sciences. Students attending the service courses are not registered as students of the Faculty of Economics and Management. In the case of the new degree in Aquaculture, the students were supposed to belong to all the three faculties participating in the entire programme. This was a novelty. However, the unforeseen logistical problems presented us with a formidable challenge, which made the previously agreed arrangements unworkable.

To overcome the impasse posed by the unanswered question of the programme’s home, the compromise was to let the Faculty of Science host it. As soon as we sorted out the problem, we moved on to other things of substance rather than form. I was happy to see serious research already done on the breeding of the Ningu, one of the most delicious fish species in Lake Victoria but which was considered long extinct; apparently eaten to extinction by the ferocious Nile Perch. That was the explanation given for what appeared to be their sudden disappearance from Lake Victoria at the time. The results of this research effort by our staff were first made public as part of a large science exhibition hosted in the JICA building during the observance of the UNESCO International Science Day held at the Faculty of Science in 2004. Thanks to this research, it was possible to breed this rare fish in captivity, moreover on a commercial scale. Once again, Makerere was leading the way and I was happy to be the captain behind the wheel of change and innovation. The BSc in Fisheries and Aquaculture was launched at the faculty of Science in 2001/2002.

The change from a three- to a four-year BSc in Agriculture programme, with students spending most of the time in the extra year on field work and practical aspects of agriculture, was another way the faculty was reinforcing its commitment to the modernisation of agriculture and farming practices in the country. One of the challenges the faculty had to address was how to arouse the interest of the students who in already unmotivated. For the majority of them, a BSc in Agriculture was not their first choice – probably their third. Human Medicine had been their first and preferred course, followed by its close cousin – Veterinary Medicine – but some students did not make the necessary “A” Level
grades to enter the Medical or Vet School. Secondly, most students came from an urban and middle class background with almost no exposure to practical farming. In fact, this reminded me of a European country I visited some years ago. The authorities in one of the cities there were shocked to hear children say that milk came from the refrigerator. Apparently, this was so because the children there lived far away from the farms and had never seen a cow milked. The children had no idea that milk came from cows. All they knew was that when you wanted to drink some milk, you only had to open the refrigerator at home and there it was. The authorities had to set up a demonstration farm on the outskirts of the city, where children could go and learn about practical farming, to see how cows were milked and possibly touch the cow’s udder.

I still strongly believe that when the Uganda National Examinations Board phased out the Biology, Chemistry and Geography (BCG) combination from the Uganda Advanced Level Certificate of Education, it was done to the disadvantage of the Faculty of Agriculture. In my time, students who wished to study Agriculture at Makerere opted for the BCG combination and more often than not, put Agriculture as their course of first choice. The Physics, Chemistry and Biology (PCB) combination led to Human or Veterinary Medicine. Given such a situation, the Faculty of Agriculture had to work very hard to find a way of motivating the students, so that at the end of their degree programme, they would find Agriculture as enjoyable and rewarding as both Human and Veterinary Medicine, and able to contribute to their profession effectively.

To some extent, this called for constant curriculum enrichment. Curriculum enrichment was not only important for the effective teaching of Agriculture as a discipline, it had a direct bearing on some of the national programmes, such as the Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture (PMA) and the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS), in which the faculty was a key player. The faculty trained the bulk of the staff that runs these programmes. In fact, the first NAADS Executive Director was once a member of staff of the faculty. It was therefore, imperative that before the students left university, they were equipped with the most up-to-date knowledge and skills in the right quantity and quality to enable them perform their tasks and roles satisfactorily. The faculty was very responsive in this aspect. All its departments took a hard look at what they taught and, in many instances, used the DACUM (Develop a Curriculum) approach to their curriculum review and development. The approach, widely used in Canada and the USA involves sitting down with practising farmers, referred to as the practitioners, to draw up new programmes or revise existing ones so that they can meet and satisfy the farmers and other stakeholders’ needs and expectations.

Someone once said something to the effect that if a university does not engage in serious research, it is essentially a glamourised high school. What such a university teaches are simply reflections of what happened yesterday. Whether
you believe it or not, what this statement implies is that universities, by their very nature, are duty bound to engage in some form of research or the other. The reasons are simple. First, research advances the frontiers of knowledge through discoveries and inventions. Second, research helps humanity to improve the living standards, through problem solving, new technologies ideas, services and new products. Universities have, among their regular members, some of the world’s best minds capable of undertaking groundbreaking and complex research in any field of human endeavour. Ever since it opened its doors to its first undergraduate students in 1952, the Faculty of Agriculture at Makerere has taken research very seriously. The research done within its laboratories at the main university campus and at Kabanyolo, or in collaboration with the NARO research institutes has benefited not only its staff to gain promotions and international recognition, but also the farming community in general. For example, Professor Kitungulu-Zaake of the Soil Science Department had been actively involved in the rejuvenation of banana growing in the central region of Uganda and was behind the efforts to make rock phosphate a cheap and environmentally friendly alternative to the chemically processed super phosphate fertilisers. Professor Kitungulu-Zaake’s research was important and relevant not only to our wellbeing, but equally for the protection of the earth’s fragile environment. The world has been steadily moving away from the excessive use of artificial fertilisers, pesticides and herbicides in agriculture to organic farming and organically-grown food.

Natural nitrogen fixing, using the rhizobium bacteria, was another equally important research in the Department of Soil Science. In a complex symbiotic relationship, this group of bacteria takes nitrogen from the atmosphere and converts it into a form that legumes like beans, groundnuts and peas can use for their growth. Therefore, rhizobium is one of the micro-organisms that play an important role in soil fertility and help to boost crop yield, even on marginal soils. Dr Mary Silver Rwakaikara and her colleagues perfected the technology of multiplying these micro-organisms, which occurs naturally in the root nodes of most leguminous plants, and harvested them on a suitable substrate. The farmers can then apply the rhizobium rich substrate on their fields. They can also mix the seeds with the rhizobium-impregnated substrate prior to planting. The results of this work led to the commercial production of rhizobium. The department was selling the bacteria to farmers as far as Rwanda. I was happy to have found some money which the department, under the headship of Dr Moses Tenywa – a soil physicist used to purchase vital equipment, including a modern Atomic Absorption Spectrophotometer, most of which was intended for research and teaching.

Research undertaken by both staff and students in the faculty over the years has produced several high yielding, pest and disease resistant crop varieties, which the faculty releases to farmers from time to time. The cowpea is one of such crops. It is an important vegetable in many parts of Uganda and, in particular, in the eastern
and northern parts of the country. Unfortunately, the crop is highly susceptible to pests and diseases. Professor Adipala Ekwamu of the Department of Crop Science had, for a long time, been running a cowpea research programme which, among other things, examined all aspects of cowpea breeding and husbandry. His efforts paid off a few years ago when, for the first time since the 1960s, his research group released a new cowpea variety. Professor Adipala Ekwamu has been a prolific researcher. In 2004, he left the faculty and took up the job of Coordinator of the newly-created Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM), based on the university’s main campus.

While he was spending long hours in the field and laboratory, his colleague – Dr Sam Kyamanywa – was equally busy figuring out how farmers could fight crop pests without applying chemical pesticides. His answer was a programme on Integrated Pest Management (IPM). The programme takes advantage of naturally occurring organisms harmless to crops, but enemies of harmful insects, as one of the strategies that can help reduce pest infestations. In implementing this programme, Dr Kyamanywa was able to attract scientists from Ohio State University in the USA to collaborate with him. His research held a lot of promise for the small-scale farmers, who could not afford the artificial pesticides and who suffer from chronic crop losses due to pests and diseases.

Uganda has a sizable community of traditional cattle keepers. These cattle keepers pose a challenge to both the central and local governments where they are located. One of their problems is pastoralism or, more precisely, nomadism. As they roam the countryside, particularly in the so-called cattle corridor, which runs all the way from Burundi in the south to Somalia in the north-east, the destructive effect of their animals takes its toll on the environment, destroying the vegetation and compacting the soil in their wake. There had been several attempts to settle these pastoralists but, from time to time, the seasonal dry spells force them to migrate to places where they can find fresh grass and water. In Nyabushozi, in Mbarara District located in Western Uganda, most of the traditional cattle keepers have more or less settled down. However, in order to stop them from resorting to their old nomadic ways again in this semi-arid and fragile ecosystem, one of the key problems – the quality of the pastures in their rangeland – had to be solved. Much of the area’s vegetation is typically savannah type; grasslands dotted with shrubs, mostly of the acacia family. Most of the grass growing in these rangelands is unsuitable for high quality cattle. New and better grasses had to be found and introduced in the area. Professor Elly Sabiiti, a specialist in pastures, embarked on a research project that would provide solutions to this problem. Indeed, his research led to improved pastures in Nyabusozi and a publication in the form of a book on how to improve the quality of rangelands in the semi-arid areas. This was one of the several examples of the faculty’s involvement in community engagement and solving societal problems.
Professor Gabriel Kiwuwa’s Elite Cow and Mubende Goat Breeding Project was another interesting research project in the Department of Crop Science which had enormous potential benefits for the small scale mixed farmers. Professor Kiwuwa, an accomplished animal geneticist and breeder, had realised that in the last 30 or so years of animal breeding research in Uganda, there had been an over-focus on cross-breeding exotic animals, mainly European Friesian, Jersey and Ganzy cattle, with the local breeds. These research efforts had succeeded in producing a crossbreed cow for Uganda, which combined the high milk-producing characteristics of its European parentage and the disease and heat-resistance traits of its African ancestry. Makerere University, the Animal Breeding Centre at Entebbe and Nakyesanja Stock Farm near Namulonge – the institutions that were most active in this programme – had achieved the objectives of the breeding programme which the Government inaugurated it in the 1960s, as one now finds beautiful black and white crossbreed cows on most modern farms in Uganda. Although these are not pure Friesian breeds, they look like them and are a common sight in some parts of Uganda, particularly in the old districts of Ankole and Masaka. Since the 1960s, there had not been much animal breeding research. According to Professor Kiwuwa, past animal breeding programmes in Uganda had made very little effort to improve the quality of the indigenous local cattle and small ruminants, particularly goats. His interest therefore was to breed elite local animal varieties and preserve the local animal gene pool. In his view, there was a real danger that the country could lose its important genetic resource.

With funding from NORAD, Professor Kiwuwa started a breeding research programme in 2002, which focused on the small ruminants and Ankole elite cattle. When he carried out a preliminary study on local goats, he discovered that the Mubende goat possessed some superior genetic qualities, like body weight that made it a good candidate for his research. He was sure that, through a sound breeding programme, he could multiply these animals and make them available to smallholder farmers as a way of helping them earn a reasonable income. Most rural communities in Uganda rear goats as a source of income. However, most of these goats are usually the low-grade type, with a live body weight of less than twenty-five kilograms. Professor Kiwuwa’s elite goats were far much bigger; perhaps three to four times heavier than most local breeds. It was a pleasure seeing his big and beautiful-looking goats at Kabanyolo, where he was conducting his breeding experiments.

In 2003, I took my friend Professor John Kaburesa, the former Vice Chancellor of the University for Development Studies in Tamale, Ghana and his colleagues who were visiting the university at the time, on a tour of Kabanyolo Agricultural Research Institute. One of the units we visited was Professor Kiwuwa’s goat pens. It was an impressive site seeing the fat and healthy-looking goats feeding and
browsing in their enclosures. After the tour, I wished I could find funding to construct more modern pens for his experiments. His next task was to breed them on a large scale and to sensitize the farmers about the elite local goats that co-existed favourably with the boar goats from South Africa and were more tolerant to diseases and other difficult local conditions. Thanks to the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine which spearheaded the scheme, many farmers started keeping boar goats imported from South Africa. The boar goats were superior to the local breeds in terms of body size, milk yield and tender meat texture but, unlike the local varieties, they were too susceptible and easily succumbed to local animal diseases. Kiwuwa's goats were a better alternative for those farmers who had no facilities to maintain the more delicate South African boar goats.

Alongside the Mubende goat-breeding programme, Professor Kiwuwa was also studying the long-horned Ankole cow to identify the elite varieties. The Ankole cows are generally small, with an average live weight of 110 kilogrammes and low milk output. On the other hand, they are extremely resistant to tick-borne diseases such as the East Coast Fever (ECF) and other common bovine diseases. Kiwuwa's idea was to study the genetic makeup of these cows through DNA sequencing, to identify those with desirable traits, such as body weight, and then undertake a selective breeding programme that would eventually produce an elite Ankole cow. Interestingly, we had heard of reports claiming that the yellow fat of the Tutsi cows, a group of cattle to which the Ankole cow belongs, was low in harmful cholesterol and a good source of a Vitamin A precursor. The reports further stated that these cows made good comparison with the long-horned Texas cattle. These claims had caught the attention of the President, a large Ankole cattle farmer in his own right. However, unlike plant breeding, animal breeding is a long time process. In this kind of work, time is the essence, but Professor Kiwuwa had opened up an interesting and important line of research which future animal breeders could take up as part of the poverty alleviation strategies.

The list of the beneficial outputs of the research projects undertaken in the Faculty of Agriculture is long. What I have highlighted here are simply examples of the faculty's effort to contribute to the development of Agriculture in Uganda. In 1999, the farm at Kabanyolo, which became Makerere University Agricultural Research Institute (MUARIK), played a dual role of serving as a teaching farm and a research facility. The post of Farm Manager was upgraded to Director. Dr V. Kasenge, the long-serving Farm Manager, left Kabanyolo and joined the Department of Agricultural Economics as a full-time lecturer. Professor Matete Bekunga, who later succeeded Professor Elly Sabiiti as Dean of the faculty, was MUARIK's first Director. During my last years as Vice Chancellor, we had initiated discussions on the possibility of transferring the entire faculty to Kabanyolo as a way of decongesting the university's main campus. These discussions were later overtaken by other developments. As part of the Strategic
Plan (2000/2001 – 2006/2007) the university was poised to transform from a highly centralised institution into loose autonomous colleges with just a few functions retained at the centre. For a long time, the Faculty of Agriculture was one of the faculties that we had wanted to transform into a College of Agriculture, along the lines of some North American universities. Although, as we had made a lot of progress towards the college system, I was not able to see the changes before I retired. There were many formidable challenges and problems, which required sorting out before the college system became a reality. My time had run out before I could sort them out.

The University Council, under the leadership of Dr David Byatike Matovu, approved the “college” concept and allowed units that so wished to explore ways they could transform into colleges. The Faculty of Agriculture seized the opportunity, wrote and submitted a funding proposal to the Rockefeller Foundation which, fortunately, was approved. The Dean of Agriculture initiated discussions on the possibility of forming a college made up of the Faculties of Agriculture, Veterinary Medicine, and Forestry, the Fisheries Unit in the Department of Zoology and the Institute of Environment and Natural Resources (MUIENR). It was a simple idea that required the five units to come together under what would perhaps be a College of Agricultural, Forestry, Fisheries, Environment and Veterinary Sciences. The discussions, which had begun well, later became more heated and at times quite stormy. Fortunately, there were no walk-outs that I remember. At the heart of the disagreement was autonomy and professional identity. The vets resented being lumped together with Agriculture. They argued that the mandates of the two faculties were different, so the two had very little in common. Agriculture was food; Veterinary Medicine was animal health and medicine – period. They wondered how I could have written a letter inviting them to a meeting to discuss colleges, an idea I had not talked to them about before, adding that the approach I had adopted this time was not 22, my usual style of doing things. Perhaps by reminding me of my usual way of doing things, they were implying that I was either pressured into writing the letter or I was trying to arm-twist them into accepting to join what they believed was an unworkable alliance with Agriculture. The fact that most of the vets’ work had a lot to do with food had no impact on their mindset. The strong-willed Dean of Veterinary Medicine was not about to accept joining a college with the Faculty of Agriculture.

Even the Zoology Department’s representative, Dr Fred Bugenyi and the Director of MUIENR, Dr Panta Kasoma were having a rough time selling the idea to their colleagues. In fact, I learnt later that they were heavily criticised for having accepted to take part in such negotiations. This reminded me of the old age criticism about universities being the most conservative institutions on earth, so much so to make some believe that changing a university was like moving a cathedral or asking the residents of a cemetery whether their home should move to another location.
Despite these setbacks, we never relented or gave up trying to reach a compromise; after all we were under obligation to implement the university’s Strategic Plan. Short of doing so meant that the Strategic Plan was as good as dead, mere dry ink on paper. The more we stayed at it, the more protracted the negotiations. However, Cole Dodge’s skilful facilitation and Dr Nanyike Musisi’s wit helped us find a middle ground – a compromise acceptable to all parties. By the time I left office, the blueprint was ready but, instead of one college, the merger document referred to two colleges: Agriculture and others, and Veterinary Medicine and others. I had to leave the rest to my successor to carry forward.

It would be unfair to end our discussion on the Faculty of Agriculture without mentioning the imaginative way in which Professor Sabiiti used the little money from the fee-paying private students at the faculty and other income-generating activities during his time as dean. For many years when the faculty enjoyed big donor funding, most of the vehicles in its fleet were donations. I recall the ageing fleet of all makes of vehicles left at Kabanyolo when the USAID funded Manpower for Agricultural Development project ended. The drawback was that vehicles which were handed over to us were already old. Keeping them on the road in good running condition was expensive and, for that reason, many of them remained grounded. The university budget could not support the high maintenance costs. This prompted the Director of the USAID mission in Uganda to raise a complaint that the university had failed to maintain the vehicles. We endeavoured to provide what we thought was a plausible explanation and the issue was not pursued further. Transport to and from Kabanyolo for staff and students was critical to the operations of the faculty, and time came when the faculty had no vehicle in sound mechanical condition to take students to Kabanyolo for their practical training. At the same time, the maintenance costs were skyrocketing, and the University Bursar had a tough time raising a budget to keep the few old vehicles on the road. Professor Sabiiti came up with a proposal that we should allow the faculty to negotiate hire purchase terms for a sixty-five seater bus with the Government Central Purchasing Corporation, a Government parastatal dealing in supplies for the Government departments. The faculty would make a cash down payment as negotiated and pay the rest in agreed instalments. He had to convince the Bursar and the university’s Tender Board that his cash flow projections were adequate to cover the payment in the agreed period. The Tender Board was convinced and permission was given for him to negotiate hire purchase terms with the Central Purchasing Corporation.

Before seeking permission from the university’s Tender Board, Professor Sabiiti had to do his homework well. He had to convince his Finance Committee that a bus, among all other faculty needs, was a priority to spend money on. It was a tough sale. Many members of staff wanted all the money to go towards improving staff welfare. They kept arguing that it was the responsibility of the Government and
the university to provide the faculty with teaching and research inputs, including vehicles. Their private income should not be used for things Government was supposed to provide. Others accused him of doing all these because he wanted to leave a legacy. After painstakingly explaining the merits of buying such important assets at the faculty’s expense and hammering the point home that in spite of the squeezed budget, the university was actually meeting most of its obligations to the faculty, the Finance Committee approved the purchase. Despite investing in capital projects, the faculty did not overlook staff welfare; it was simply that it was not generating much money as the Faculty of Arts, Law or Social Sciences. Kabanyolo was not a commercial farm, but a research and teaching facility; so it generated very little income for the faculty. Secondly and more importantly, the faculty had no capacity to admit too many private students; and even if it had, very few self-sponsored students were applying for Agriculture.

The faculty took delivery of the new bus in 1999 and I was invited to commission it. It was a joyous moment for the dean, the faculty as a whole and for us in university administration. One should not forget that the last big bus and heavy-duty lorry the faculty had, a donation from the USAID, came in the 1980s when Professor Herbert Kanaabi Nsubuga (now deceased) was dean and had long served their time. The new Isuzu bus was in addition to a Toyota van and a Mersey Ferguson tractor the faculty had purchased earlier from its own private income. When you ask any graduate who studied Agriculture at Makerere in the good old days, the one thing they vividly remember was driving a tractor and coupling a plough to it during their practical training at Kabanyolo. I guess this was one of the attractions every student of Agriculture looked forward to. Sadly, the old tractor had long broken down. Occasionally, the Farm Manager would find some money and have it repaired so he could use it for his farm chores, but it would break down again in no time. The students had to do without this vital component of their training. Again, Professor Sabiiti was able to raise money out of the faculty’s private income to buy a brand new Mersey Ferguson tractor, which students could also use for their practical training. That was the first time the faculty had used its own money to buy an asset of this kind. Given the faculty’s limited resources, this was by no means a small feat of imagination and achievement; and one could safely say that, by so doing, the faculty had ushered in a revolution of thinking outside the box.

When the Dean of Students, Mr John Ekudu, resumed feeding the students on chicken and eggs, the faculty, under the guidance of the Deputy Dean, Dr Marion Okot of the Department of Animal Science, picked a lot of interest in poultry rearing and, for a while, Kabanyolo supplied the university kitchens with fat and succulent broilers. Although, delayed payment of bills slowed down the supply, the opportunity to make some money was not lost on those running the university farm. Kabanyolo used to have its own animal feed mill but over the years, the mill had stopped producing feed and the silos had lain idle. One reason
was that the university did not have money to capitalise it. Originally, the feed mill was to assist the farm make its own feed for the cattle and other experimental animals kept on the farm. In the 1970s, the idea flopped and that was the end of the mill. In 2003, the faculty took interest in reviving the mill. This time, it would capitalise it with its own money. The mill would serve a dual role of providing the farm with feed and also as a commercial enterprise.

The Department of Agricultural Economics and Mr Lwasa, one of the Assistant Farm Managers, did some number crunching and ascertained that indeed, the mill was profitable as a commercial enterprise. It could pay all its overheads, including salaries and wages for the work and still remain with a reasonable surplus as profit. Of course, there were several technical problems to sort out before the mill could go into full production. For a start, it was an old mill that had been lying idle for many years. Inevitably, some parts had gone rusty and needed replacement. Fortunately, the technical people were able to fix most of the mechanical problems and before long, the mill was producing a variety of animal feed of very high quality and selling them at a good profit. Power outage and water were the constant and major problems at Kabanyolo. The new pump we purchased in 1994 failed to work until the USAID provided a more robust one. However, Mr Ndawula Kaweesi (who later became Honourable Ndawula Kaweesi when he was elected Member of Parliament), then an Assistant University Engineer (Electrical) with the Estates Department and the Uganda Electricity Board Engineers, had managed to fix most of the power problems at Kabanyolo, including frequent power blackouts. Now the farm had water and stable power and the feed mill could run normally for most of the time.

Fish farming was another activity that Professor Sabiiti tried to re-establish at Kabanyolo. His final act before he stepped down as dean was to negotiate the breakaway of the Department of Forestry from Agriculture to become the Faculty of Forestry and Nature Conservation, the most amicable split of one academic unit from another I was privileged to have witnessed as Vice Chancellor. It was an uncontested divorce. More often than not, bitter wrangling and bickering preceded the breakaway of an academic unit from another. With Forestry gone, the Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry went back to its pre-1970 name of Faculty of Agriculture. Finally, as we shall see later, the Faculty of Agriculture was one of the academic units that participated most actively in the – HYPERLINK “mailto:I@mak.com” \h – I@mak.com programme, and for good reasons too, because the – HYPERLINK “mailto:I@mak.com” \h – I@mak.com programme was introduced to link the university more closely with the community, the focus of the programme being on decentralisation and local governments. Agriculture was one of the closest disciplines for a university-community partnership.
Faculty of Forest and Nature Conservation – The Uncontested Divorce

We have seen how close the Department of Forestry came to a stillbirth as Idi Amin’s military rule and political chaos, which followed his overthrow, engulfed the country.

When the Norwegians, who had helped the Government of Uganda and Makerere University set up a Department of Forestry in 1970, had had enough of Uganda’s chaos, they simply packed their bags and left the country; but they were leaving behind a new department that was barely two years old. In my opinion, two extraordinary things happened that averted the demise of the young department in its formative years. I have briefly lauded both of them. The first was that the Norwegians did not completely abandon their pioneer students; instead they arranged for them to join the University of Nairobi where they taught them until they graduated. Secondly, the faculty’s management showed a lot of magnanimity towards the new department. When the Norwegians left, it was Professor Joseph Mukiibi, then a senior member of staff in the Department of Crop Science, who gave the young but faltering department the bolstering support that averted its imminent closure. From that shaky beginning, the department grew rapidly. Most of the pioneer students who had performed well and those who followed them in the subsequent years came back to Makerere as staff development fellows. Many went abroad to places like the University of California, Berkley, for their advanced degrees. A few names among this pioneer group, which easily come to mind, are John Kaboggoza, Banana Arali, William Gombya and late John Aluma. They all came back from America and Europe with doctorates in the various fields of Forestry and Silviculture. Interestingly and despite the many opportunities outside the country, they stayed and braved Uganda’s hard times, with the exception of John Aluma, now deceased, who later joined NARO as Head of the Forest Research Institute (FORI) at Nakawa. At the time of his death in 2005, he was NARO’s Deputy Director-General for Research. I am sure Professor Mukiibi as NARO’s Director-General was proud to have had one of his students deputising for him. Besides these young men, the department was fortunate to have had Dr David Ruyoka, a Norwegian PhD holder, who went on to become the first Ugandan Professor of Forestry at Makerere and Head of Department for many years. The one thing I admired most about Professor Ruyoka, besides his academic work and business acumen, was the way he kept his old white Peugeot 505 saloon car meticulously clean and in sound mechanical condition, that every time you saw it, it looked new. When his term expired, Dr John Aluma, also a PhD graduate of the Agricultural University of Norway, took over as Head of Department. The story goes that as a PhD student at As in Eastern Norway, John Aluma had picked an interest in snow skiing as most Norwegians. He probably did not realise that, as a person born in the tropics, his bones were not quite designed for winter pursuits like snow skiing. One day he
went skiing and before he knew it, he was a heap of broken bones lying below the ski resort. Fortunately, he fully recovered from his injuries and was able to complete his PhD before returning home. Ms T. Byaruhanga was another old timer in the department. She is a woman of incredible courage and determination who did not see her disability as a deterrent to a career in a physically demanding discipline like Forestry. Instead, she saw it as a challenge and faced it head-on. For a long time, she was the only female lecturer in the department. In those humble beginnings, one ought not to forget the contribution of the staff of the Uganda Forest Department, who were for many years part of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. Dr Kalani, the Chief Forest Conservator, taught in the department as a part-time lecturer for many years.

After David Ruyoka and John Aluma, John Kaboggoza took over the reins as head of a department he helped found as one of its pioneer students, way back in 1970. At the time he took over the headship, the department was already making extensive use of Budongo Forest Reserve in western Uganda, one of the few remaining enclaves of the country's indigenous tropical rain forests, for research and undergraduate fieldwork. In 1994, after President Yoweri Museveni had made an official visit to Norway, it became apparent that the Royal Government of the Kingdom of Norway was poised to resume development assistance to Uganda and the forest sector was one of the front-runners for the new Norwegian assistance. In the same year, I also made a visit to Norway, mainly to discuss two issues; the NUFU programme and NORAD's assistance to Makerere University.

Suffice it to say that one of the outcomes of my visit to Norway, which also took me to the Agricultural University of Norway where Agriculture and Forestry are taught, was the inclusion of more departments in the NUFU programme at Makerere. During the visit to As, I had occasion to hold discussions with the staff of the Forestry Department. The Head of Department told me that they too had started exploratory talks with John Kaboggoza, with a view to resuming collaboration with the Department of Forestry at Makerere a department in whose beginning the Agricultural University of Norway had played a significant role, and who had been waiting for official communication from NORAD. When I visited the Ministry of Foreign Cooperation in Oslo to discuss how Makerere could position itself to benefit from the new Norwegian assistance to Uganda, I received confirmation from a senior official that when NORAD resumed its assistance programmes in Uganda, Makerere University would be top on the list of Ugandan institutions earmarked for Norwegian support. That was reassuring news and I was pleasantly surprised when, a few months after my return from Norway, John Kaboggoza informed me that NORAD had provided a grant to the Department of Forestry for a building, equipment and vehicles. But NORAD, being a Norwegian Government agency, did not enter into agreements with individual institutions; it dealt directly with the Governments. In the case of
Uganda, the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MFPED) was the Government ministry with authority to enter into agreement with donor agencies. Therefore, it was the MFPED that signed the frame agreement with NORAD on behalf of Makerere University in 1995. Dr Kaboggoza and I were in attendance to witness the signing ceremony.

In order to expedite the implementation of its assistance programme to Makerere University, NORAD mandated the Norwegian Embassy to handle all procedural matters related to this agreement. Then, Norway did not have an Embassy in Kampala; the nearest was at Dar es Salaam. However, about the time the agreement was signed, the Norwegian Government had begun normalising diplomatic relations with Uganda and had designated Dr Arid Oyen to act as its Charge d’Affair in Kampala. When the Norwegian Government opened a full-fledged Embassy in Kampala a couple of years later, Dr Oyen’s status changed, as he became his country’s first Ambassador in Uganda. As we shall see later, Ambassador Oyen was instrumental in the discussions which led to the extended NORAD support to Makerere through the Institutional Development Programme, negotiated shortly before the first phase of the NORAD support to the Department of Forestry ended. As one of the mandatory project implementation requirements, the university had to submit quarterly progress reports to Oslo through the MFPED and the Norwegian Embassy in Dar es Salaam, and at the same time hold quarterly tripartite meetings, also chaired by the MFPED, to review the project’s progress. Dr Oyen, before becoming an ambassador, used to attend these meetings together with Mr Karl Solberg, who used to fly from Dar es Salaam with a few colleagues from the Embassy. By then, Mr Solberg, a graduate of the Agricultural University of Norway, was serving as First Secretary at the Embassy in Dar es Salaam. In a way, he was also acting as the project’s desk officer. When the Kampala Embassy opened, he relocated to Uganda until his retirement. As we shall see later, Karl Salberg’s presence at the Embassy in Kampala was a big blessing for the university. Mr Patrick Ocailap of the Aid Liaison Office at the MFPED chaired the meetings on behalf of his Permanent Secretary and Secretary to the Treasury. Dr Kaboggoza and I represented the university.

It was during these meetings that John Kaboggaza’s report writing skills and his ability to organise documents, including the financial reports, became evident and he always submitted them on time. Perhaps I should not have been so surprised, because I remembered that he had taken his PhD at one of the best schools in USA – the University of California at Berkley. In a way, Kaboggoza’s project was a pilot project for NORAD at Makerere. Therefore, its success or failure would profoundly influence NORAD’s future support to the university. The project had to succeed at all cost, and succeed it did. Save for the inevitable hitches and occasional glitches, the project was well executed and served as a catalyst and a prelude to the bigger support NORAD extended to the university later.
Besides the two buildings behind the Faculty of Agriculture, the department's relationship with Nyabyeya Forestry School in Masindi was also strengthened. The BSc Forestry students could now spend time there on field work in the nearby Budongo Forest. In fact, Kaboggoza's project made a significant contribution to the college's regeneration. The project also had funds for research in Budongo Forest Reserve.

It did not come as a surprise to me to see Dr Kaboggoza so excited about his project and the prospects of the department moving into a building of its own. However, before cutting of the soil, there was a problem to sort out. The site University Council had allocated for the construction of the new building was littered with old and vandalised green houses. There had been talk that the Faculty of Agriculture was interested in rehabilitating them for research purposes. Was it now ready to surrender the site in favour of a building for the Department of Forestry? Fortunately for John Kaboggoza and his colleagues, the answer was in the affirmative. The old and disused green houses had to go, but at a cost. Before sinking the foundation for the new building, all the concrete slabs on which the green houses stood had to be dug up, and broken glass and mangled metal frames removed. That cost money and time. Luckily, even with that additional expenditure, we managed to stay within the budget. With all problems sorted out, John Kaboggoza and his colleagues quickly sat down with the architects, Technology Consult, and started planning the design of their new building. It had to be an attractive and inspiring building that reflected the role of Forestry in the country's economic development and the role trees and forests play in the conservation of the environment. It also had to be beautiful and functional. During the design stage, Dr Kaboggoza came to me very often with the architectural drawings, for either my comment on the design or advice. By the time the drawings were submitted to the Estates and Works Committee of Council for approval, we were all satisfied that, given the budget NORAD had allocated for the building, the design was satisfactory. It combined both aesthetics and functionality, and in keeping with the university's architectural character, we insisted on roofing it with red burnt-clay tiles. The Forestry building set the standards for all the new buildings constructed during my time as Vice Chancellor. When Ambassador Oyen came to open it, he was impressed with the workmanship and its cost per square metre, which in his opinion was quite low compared with what it would have cost if it had been built in his country. He thought that NORAD and Makerere University got real value for money. For the contractor, Excel, this was the second job at Makerere. My colleagues in the university administration and I were just as happy about the new building as Dr Kaboggoza and his staff. It was an achievement well worth celebrating. To mark this important milestone, John Kaboggoza gave us tree seedlings, which we planted in the new building's landscaped compound.
The structural faults detected later notwithstanding, I am sure my colleague Avitus Tibarimbasa, the then University Secretary was even more relieved than the rest of us to see the job completed to the satisfaction of all concerned, and to receive the keys from the contractor and passed them on to Dr Kaboggoza after the Ambassador had cut the ribbon. When the Estates and Works Committee of Council awarded the tender to Excel, Ambassador Oyen was quick to raise some queries. He wanted to be assured that during the process of arriving at the winner, the university had followed all procedural requirements to the letter. The responsibility to provide the explanation rested with the University Secretary. He spent time at the Norwegian Embassy explaining the university tender system until the Ambassador was convinced that nothing was amiss. The main Forestry building and the smaller one behind it, meant to serve as a workshop, were the first of the five buildings at Makerere, built with NORAD funding, between 1996 and 2004. The department could at last boast of a home of its own away from the overcrowded Faculty of Agriculture building. For a while at least, there would be enough space for every member of staff to have an office. It was goodbye to crowded conditions and office sharing. In the same token, the department was slowly but surely moving out of the ambit of its mother faculty.

Shortly before and soon after moving into the new building, the talk of a Faculty of Forestry began filling the corridors. Sooner than later, rumours turned into fact and as we have seen, the then Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry seemed to be ready to spin off Forestry. I did not detect any serious opposition to the Department of Forestry going its separate ways. Since the department opened in 1970, the agriculturists had provided it with a home, nursed and nurtured it. If it now felt mature enough to break away, no one seemed prepared to stand in its way. However, before they put the plan of breaking up the faculty into two in action, the dean and his colleagues had decided to sound out my opinion – what I thought about the whole thing. My advice was simple. Before they submitted a proposal to the Academic Registrar for Senate to consider, they had to work hard on a rationale that would justify why the department should be allowed to break away from the Faculty of Agriculture to create a separate faculty, and whether the new faculty was financially sustainable and academically viable. Financial sustainability had to be taken into consideration, because what had been a single department was turning into a faculty, which was a much larger unit with several departments and an increased number of staff. This required a bigger budget than a single department. Senate and the University Council had grown weary of the excessive fragmentation of academic units and the University Bursar had already warned that new units were adding more burdens to an overstretched university budget. The two university policy-making bodies needed to be convinced that it was really the right way for the Department of Forestry to go. With that warning in mind, the faculty worked hard, crafting a document that neither Senate nor the University Council would throw back at them.
Senate debated the merits of creating a new faculty and convinced itself that the department merited upgrading to a faculty status. At the end of the deliberations, Senate was in position to recommend to the University Council that the Department of Forestry be allowed to transform into a Faculty of Forestry and Nature Conservation, though suggesting a modification to the name Dr Kaboggoza and his colleagues had proposed for their new faculty. The addition of Nature Conservation to the name was a reflection of the new faculty’s broader mandate and the new thinking that the science of forestry went hand in hand with responsible and sustainable use of natural resources, such as forests and woodlands, as well as the preservation of the environment. The University Council under Dr David Matovu accepted Senate’s recommendation and in 1999, the Faculty of Forestry and Nature Conservation with three departments, namely Community Forestry, Forest Management and Forest Products Engineering, was born with Dr John Kaboggoza as its first Dean and Dr Arali Banana as its first Associate Dean, who in 2001 became Deputy Dean when the new Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act of 2001 came into force. Dr W. S. Gombya Sembajjwe, who obtained a PhD degree from the University of Wales was one of the pioneer heads of the new Department of Forest Management.

The newly-acquired status came with changes and new developments. Instead of the single four-year BSc Forestry degree the old department had run since its inception in 1970, the faculty could now mount new programmes as and when it so wished. Indeed, that was what exactly happened. In 2001, the faculty introduced two new three-year undergraduate degrees: the Bachelor of Community Forestry with a rather unusual acronym (BCF) and the Bachelor of Science in Wood Science and Technology (BSc WST). For a long-time, evening programmes were still very much an alien concept to most science-based faculties. However, the new faculty decided to experiment. The two new degrees would be offered as both day and evening programmes. The experiment worked and before long, even the traditional BSc Forestry degree was being offered as a day and evening programme. This experiment demonstrated that even in the science-based departments, evening programmes were possible. About the same time, the faculty was running two graduate degrees: the Master of Science in Forestry, started when the faculty was a Department of Forestry and a new one – the Master of Science in Agro-forestry, which was started after the department had separated from Agriculture and became a faculty. Then, Agro-forestry was a relatively new discipline, involving the intercropping of trees and crops on the same farm with few specialists. Before the department transformed into a faculty, it had been collaborating with NorAgric, an organisation based at the Agricultural University of Norway (ANLH). With NorAgric support, the young faculty partnered with Sokoine University of Agriculture in Morogoro, Tanzania on a regional Masters degree programme under a tripartite arrangement dubbed the North-South-South collaboration. We had been talking about North-South
collaboration for some time, but this was the first concrete example of such an arrangement in practice. Apparently, the new faculty was up to a good start.

Besides a well-stocked faculty library and a well-equipped computer laboratory, the Faculty of Forestry and Nature Conservation boasts of a conference room in its new building, a facility I had come to patronise for my important meetings. This is where we conducted the negotiations with the NORAD officials in 2000 which, as we shall see later paved the way for the university-wide Institutional Development Programme. I guess when the history of Makerere University is eventually written by the experts, this room will have an honourable mention. The Faculty of Forestry and Nature Conservation has every reason to be grateful to NORAD in particular and the Royal Government of the Kingdom of Norway.

East African School of Library and Information Science (EASLIS) – Keeping the East African Dream Alive

A stone throw from the Faculty of Agriculture, across the north end of University Road and adjoining to the university’s Main Library is the East African School of Library and Information Science, which was formerly the East African School of Librarianship. It was a remnant of the old East African Community institutions created in the 1960s as part of the common services. Like most academic units at Makerere that have outgrown their original purposes, the school had a humble beginning with a very limited mandate, which was to train librarians for the three East African countries at certificate and postgraduate diploma levels. When the old community collapsed in 1977, Makerere University and the Ugandan Government chose to keep the school as one of the surviving institutions. The East African Development Bank, the Inter-university Council for East Africa and Soroti Flying School were the other institutions that survived the collapse of the first East African Community. All were situated in Uganda. Although Kenya and Tanzania had long withdrawn their financial support for understandable reasons, the school nevertheless remained open to all East Africans who wanted to pursue a career in Librarianship. In spite of the fact that students from Kenya and Tanzania were no longer coming to Makerere in large numbers, a few of them continued to patronise the school. Additionally, the student exchange scheme between Uganda and Tanzania, coordinated by the Inter-university Council for East Africa helped to keep Tanzanian students coming to study at Makerere, even when conditions in Uganda were really appalling. In exchange, Ugandan students went to Tanzanian universities. The majority of them went to the University of Dar es Salaam. The scheme also made it possible for the school to attract several Tanzanian students interested in Librarianship.

When Idi Amin mass-expelled the Europeans and Asians at the beginning of the 1970s, the school was not spared the acute staff shortage the university experienced at the time. However, it was fortunate to have been one of the beneficiaries of the
big staff recruitment drive the university undertook in India and Pakistan in the mid-1970s. Dr Seyd Abidi and a few of his colleagues, mainly from Alighah and Poona Universities in India, were part of the contingent of academics from the Indian sub-continent who joined the teaching staff of the university in the mid-1970s, under the expatriate scheme Idi Amin had worked out with Makerere University as a way of ameliorating the appalling staff shortages. Besides teaching, Dr Abidi assumed the leadership of the school. He served as its Director for over 20 productive years until Dr Isaac Kigongo-Bukenya took over in 2001. His colleagues from India and Pakistan came and went, but Abidi chose to stay and keep his school afloat. Even after relinquishing the directorship, he stayed on as an Associate Professor. He had also long ceased to receive an expatriate salary; but his rare and long dedication and devotion to the school and Makerere University eventually paid off well in the end. When he first came to Makerere, there was hardly any Ugandan on the academic staff of the school which now boasts of over ten Ugandans, while some have even acquired PhD degrees under his leadership. Dr Isaac Kigongo-Bukenya, who obtained his PhD from the University of Wales on a Makerere University scholarship and Dr Robert Ikoja Odongo who obtained his from the University of Kwazulu-Natal in South Africa, also on a Makerere University scholarship, are two cases in point.

Seyd Abidi had another attribute: he knew how to make friends. When Johnny Carson came as US Ambassador to Uganda, Seyd Abidi seized the opportunity. He had learnt that Mrs Carson had an advanced degree in Librarianship and therefore, qualified to teach at the school. He somehow convinced her to offer part-time teaching at the school for him. However, given the sensitivity of her position as the wife of the American Ambassador, as well as the security concerns and the risks involved, it looked a too far-fetched idea, a long shot at best. Would the American security agencies and her husband allow her trotting to Makerere to teach whenever she was time-tabled to lecture? Was the risk worth taking? What if she was kidnapped on the way or something dreadful happened to her at Makerere? Rowdy students on rampage could maul her! The litany of the worst possible things that could happen to her seemed endless. Even we in the university administration were equally uneasy and concerned for her safety. We imagined the security nightmare the university would be subjected to whenever she came to teach. However, and to my amazement, Mrs Carsons was a woman not easily put off by such odds. One of the things about her that helped me put some of my fears to rest was her marriage itself. She was white and her husband, Ambassador Carsons was a black man. Given the racial prejudices still very much prevalent in the American society at the time, a mixed marriage like hers must have been a tough sell. From the little I knew about the American society, most white parents are not always keen on black sons-in-law. I was not even sure whether the African-American parents were keen on white-in-laws either. If she could sell the idea of marrying a black boy to her parents, I guessed she was capable of handling any
obstacle or whatever situation that happened to stand in her way. For Makerere, it
was some history in the making. There were not many wives of foreign diplomats
accredited to Uganda teaching at the university. My guess was that no one had
ever done it before her.

Just as my gut feel had told me, she easily convinced her husband and whoever
else was concerned for her security at the Embassy that Makerere was a safe place
and she was ready to teach there. Indeed, before long, she was giving lectures
in Abidi’s school every now and then. Occasionally, I would bump into her in
front of the Main Building on those occasions when she had lectures. Apart from
the students and a few people who every so often saw her whenever she came to
teach, our worst fears never materialised. Her presence at the university had none
of the usual paraphernalia and security inconveniences, which was the hallmark
of such high profile figures whenever they visited the university. My hunch at the
time was that the Embassy provided her with under-cover security arrangements,
which we knew nothing about. She assisted the school whenever she could until
her husband’s duty in Uganda ended.

Among the many other friends Seyd Abidi wooed for the school was
the Managing Director of Bank of Baroda. The bank is one of oldest foreign
commercial banks in Uganda, but its role in Makerere’s affairs beyond hiring
graduates trained there was minimal. However, Dr Abidi managed to persuade the
Managing Director at the time to donate computers and a few other educational
materials to the school, which the kind man did gladly. This was in addition to
what the school had already bought with its own resources. As the friendship
grew, Abidi invited me to his little flat on Quarry House from time to time to
meet and share a cup of tea with the Bank of Baroda’s MD as a way of thanking
him for the generous donations his bank was making to the school. I always
enjoyed the meals served by his wife and his daughter who had graduated with a
Bachelor of Pharmacy degree from Makerere a few years earlier, and a chat with
the banker.

EASLIS and Makerere University Press – Publish or Perish

When we perceived the idea of establishing a Makerere University Press, it was to
assist members of staff to publish their scholarly work. The press needed a good
Editorial Board and, as we looked around for the right person who would chair it,
for all intents and purposes, Dr Abidi was the obvious choice. He gladly accepted
to take on the responsibility. This was the first time Makerere University would
have its own publishing house. We also requested Professor Adipala Ekwamu to
assist with the editing of the manuscripts. Professor Adipala had accumulated
a wealth of quality editing and peer-review experience as Chief Editor of the
African Journal of Crop Science, an initiative of the Department of Crop
Science and the Faculty of Agriculture. This journal had gained international
recognition, because of its high quality papers and good editing. As we soon
learnt, starting a publishing house from scratch entailed a lot of hard work and
resources. Unfortunately for Abidi, Makerere University Press was starting with
virtually no start-up capital. We had to borrow some 20 million shillings from
the Local Donors’ Account in the Uganda Commercial Bank to capitalise it.
In essence, this was just seed money to get started. We needed a lot more to do
bigger things. Fortunately, Dr Abidi and his Editorial Board used the seed money
effectively and before long, the new press had started production. Some of the
books the new press published in its first few years of existence included those
written by both Makerere and non-Makerere authors. Professor Gingera Pinyewa
of Political Science; Professor David Osiru of Crop Science; Professor Eldad
Banda of Physics; Dr Emillo Ovuga and the late John Buga of the Department
of Psychiatry; Geoffrey Tukahibwa and Dr Foster Byarugaba of the Department
of Political Science; E. Biryabarema; Dr A. Nuwagaba and D. Lumonya of the
Department of Social Work and Social Administration; E. Beyaaraza of the
Department of Philosophy; Geoffrey Bekunda; Professor Livingstone Luboobi,
now the Vice Chancellor; J. Y. T. Mugisha and J. Kasozi of the Department
of Mathematics, and Mr Aaron Mukwaya of Political Science were some of first
authors to have their books published by the new Makerere University Press.

Given the fact that the press started off with very little capital, the editing
and print quality of its first publications were quite impressive. Nevertheless, the
problem of inadequate capital continued to dog the young press. At some point,
it almost went into limbo. Friends of Makerere in Canada (FOMAC), a non-
governmental organisation took interest in the press but, for some reason, the deal
fell through. One reason was the failure of the donors FOMAC was depending
on to honour their funding pledges. FOMAC was the brainchild of Professor
Charles Olweny, a Uganda oncologist and member of staff of the Department
of Medicine, forced to flee Uganda to Australia during the Obote II regime. He
was now living in Winnipeg in Canada. Professor Olweny was one of the few
Ugandans in the Diaspora who remained committed to Makerere, his alma mater
and former employer. FOMAC was kind enough to sponsor Professor Margaret
MacPherson’s trip to Makerere as a consultant to advise us on how best we could
set up a financially self-sustaining university press. Professor MacPherson was
no stranger to Makerere. She had been a member of staff of the then vibrant
Department of Literature for many years and was one of the last British members
of staff to leave Makerere in the latter part of Idi Amin’s regime. She was also
renowned for editing and single-handedly publishing the Old Makererean, a
publication which used to provide a lot of useful information and titbits about
the people who had studied or taught at Makerere, scattered all over the world,
and she had been very successful at it. Unfortunately, Professor MacPherson’s
report failed to attract funding. Even the second report by a Canadian consultant,
again funded by FOMAC, also drew a blank. Having pulled so many blanks, the
young press had to continue limping on. Nevertheless, it was a promising limp. During the Platinum Jubilee celebrations in 1997, the then Chancellor, President Yoweri Museveni, used the occasion to launch the books which the press had published. He also promised to assist it if and when he could find some money to spare. However, given the many commitments the President had and the long red tape to get to him, it was impossible to go back to him and remind him to make good his promise. It all ended there. By the time I left the university, the press had come under the supervision of the Board of the Commercial Units, with some additional funding on the horizon. My cry was that the board would indeed give the young press the badly needed capitalisation.

As I have pointed out before, year-in-year-out, space for teaching, offices and staff accommodation is a constant headache a Vice Chancellor at Makerere has to cope with, more or less on a daily basis. The East African School of Librarianship was not an exception in putting pressure on the Vice Chancellor for additional space. It was equally hard pressed for teaching and office space, and with more computers coming in by the drove, the problem of additional space became acute.

After the 1987 Donors Conference, the newly created Planning and Development Department moved from the Main Building where it had been just a Planning Unit in the office of the University Secretary into the basement of the East African School of Librarianship building. The basement was originally a parking lot for the school and Main Library staff. However, with funding provided by the UNDP, it had been converted into offices for the new Planning and Development Department. Professor Matia Semakula Kiwanuka, Dr Eliab Lugujjo, Milly Aligawesa and Muhamad Kibirige Mayanja, all worked from there during their time as Directors of Planning. The school wanted this space back, because new programmes were coming on stream. Staff and student numbers were also on the rise, and there was demand for space for the computer laboratory too. All this required additional space, which the Vice Chancellor was supposed to find. Surprisingly, help came from the most unexpected quarters.

For the first time since Makerere College changed status to a University College, and finally to Makerere University, the Academic Registrar’s offices had been housed in the Main Building. When the Senate House was completed, the entire Academic Registrar’s offices moved out of the Main Building. In fact, before moving out, we realised that they had been occupying a lot of space on the second and third floors of the building. The examination strong-room was also located on the second floor. All this led to a lot of overcrowding in the building. These offices now freed, the Vice Chancellor had some spare space to play with. I must say it was a most welcome relief for me, but it was bad news for my friend, Kibirige Mayanja, who was then the university’s Director of Planning. He had to vacate the East African School of Librarianship premises and shift his unit’s
offices to the Main Building. Although our decision for him meant giving up much bigger space, he quickly obliged, moreover to Dr Abidi’s delight. At least, that was one more problem amicably solved.

When talk of the resuscitation of East African cooperation started flying around in the mid- and late 1990s, once again, the school came into regional limelight and after the East African Treaty of Cooperation was finally signed in Arusha in 1999, the school was duly recognised as one of the surviving institutions. To reflect the new mood and the progress the school had made since its inception in the 1960s, it adopted a new and expanded mandate, as well as a new name. The name changed from the East African School of Librarianship to the East African School of Library and Information Science. One of the changes the new name tried to reflect was the fact that in modern times, the librarian’s role was no longer confined to looking after libraries and being a custodian of books and other valuable documents. Librarians were increasingly becoming information specialists. Therefore, the new name was intended to reflect the librarian’s changing role in society.

With the new name came new programmes. In addition to the traditional Postgraduate Diploma in Librarianship, the school initiated two undergraduate Diplomas, one in Archives and Records Management and the other in Library and Information Studies, both offered during the day and in the evenings. The Certificate in Librarianship was phased out and replaced by a Certificate in Library and Information Studies, as an evening only programme. In 2002, the school had its Master of Science in Information Science approved. This was a giant step forward for it, given the fact that it started out as a non-degree awarding institution, with just a skeletal staff. The school was now in position, in terms of staffing and other requisite resources, to offer a postgraduate graduate degree. To me, this was yet another example of Makerere’s recovery from the brink. For a long time, Makerere University had stood still or was simply marking time. Now it was beginning to look like the fuse that had been lit early in the 1990s was now becoming unstoppable and inextinguishable. We have already seen how, during Professor Kajubi’s tenure as Vice Chancellor, the school had introduced an undergraduate degree in Library and Information Science, popularly known as BLIS. By the time I retired, no one in the school was talking about another undergraduate degree, the school was moving into postgraduate programmes. I am more than certain that sooner than later, someone in the school will come up with a new idea that will translate into a new programme. On a happy note, it was a pleasure to see Dr Isaac Kigongo Bukenya and Robert Ikoja Odongo get their PhDs and quickly rising to the rank of Associate Professors. I recall with fond memory how Isaac Kigongo Bukenya’s sense of humour made our tour of South Africa in 2003 an enjoyable and memorable experience. I particularly remember him on our long and tiresome journey by road from Bloemfontein to Durban.
I was often reminded by those in the know that as the heart is to the human body, so is the library to a university. They argued, rightly or wrongly, that the academic life of a university revolved around the library. Now, I am not so sure it still does. I based this simple observation on the fact in the last few decades, the digital revolution and the information super highway dubbed the World Wide Web have ushered in incredible changes we could never have imagined some 30 or so years ago. Because of this, many things we used to take for granted have had to be re-engineered altogether to suit the changing times. Here is a simple example to illustrate the point: When I was an undergraduate and postgraduate student at the beginning of and in the mid-1970s, I never heard of journals online or used the Internet as an alternative to a library; not because I did not want to, but back then there was no Internet, e-books nor journals online. I guess even the word online had not been invented. The technology as we know it today was in its infancy and evolving. Today, even kindergarten kids are on the Internet, surfing for all sorts of things.

I once visited the Main Library (or the “lib” as students called it), and at the end of my tour, I made a remark which, I am afraid, was becoming a reality. I told the library staff that they had better prepare themselves for the days of a bookless library, adding as a joke, that sooner than later, hard copy books and other publications would be produced only for the museums and as collectors’ items. I said that “for now, books, newspapers and journals would continue to come in both electronic and hard copies”, but predicted that time was yonder when the electronic or soft copies will be the only versions available. Therefore, a visit to the library would cease to be an academic necessity, but a leisure activity like a walk in the park or to the woods. My listeners, as I expected, were skeptical, if not amused by such talk. Many in the audience must have thought I was daydreaming. That was about seven years ago. In fact, if some smart fellows asked me whether I was implying that libraries as we know them today were doomed to extinction, I think I would have given them an ambivalent answer, because then I was also not so sure I was right. It was just a gaze in the crystal ball.

As I put pen to paper, what at the time seemed to be a far-fetched idea and possibly the idle talk of a middle-aged man is slowly becoming today’s reality. On the other hand, I am sure there are many who would still insist that nothing beats a book in its hard copy version. They would argue that the beauty of a hard copy was in its convenience; you just walked to the shelf, pulled it out and read as and when you felt like. Unless lost or damaged, a book was always there any time you needed it. You did not need the complicated gadgetry of modern hi-tech to access a hard copy. To stretch the argument a little further, one would say that book stores had not yet closed shop, because books were no longer published as hard
copies. If anything, the book industry continued to boom, but cleverly combining old and new technology. Some would even liken it to what happened to the Post Office at the advent of the e-mail revolution. In spite of the rapid advances in communication, the Post Office was still alive and well. However, as the information and communication technology revolution continued to advance unabated, only time would tell what would happen in the future. My guess then was that books and other written materials would continue to be available in the hard copy, but also in the soft or electronic version. The rapid advances in technology notwithstanding, the traditional library still had a future and would continue to be the heart and soul of any reputable academic institution like Makerere University.

Makerere University Library has a long history, but I shall not delve into that. I will rather leave it to professional historians. My focus is on what happened there when I was Vice Chancellor. During my time, the university library system was made up of the Main Library opposite the Faculty of Agriculture and seven branch libraries located at Mulago, the Sir Albert Cook Medical Library; Kabanyolo; the School of Education; the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine; MISR; the Institute of Adult and Continuing Education and in the East African School of Library and Information Science. The Main Library was the seat of the head librarian, officially known as the University Librarian. I was reliably informed that the Main Library moved into the current building in 1959 after it was opened by Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, during her visit to Uganda. It was extended in 1962 and again in 1972. Since then, there had been no further developments until 1997 when, hard pressed for space, James Mugasha, the long serving University Librarian, thought he could raise enough funds to add a new extension. His plan was quite ambitious. He wanted an eight-floor tower and a modification to the main entrance. Instead of facing west, he wanted to move the main entrance to the side where the small reading park is located, which is the south wing of the building. His idea was to finance the construction of the extension with the savings he was putting aside. He presented his proposal to me and as management, we advised him to conceptualise his ideas with costed architectural drawings. Determined to get things moving, he turned to Technology Consult (TECO), at the Faculty of Technology, to assist him with the architectural sketches. TECO promptly prepared the sketches and the provisional bills of quantity for him. The kind of extension he wanted was costed at more than three billion shillings. At the time, James Mugasha did not have that kind of money. He had hardly saved a billion shillings. All the same, he wanted to start straight away with the little he had in the account. The Senate Library Committee was solidly behind him too. Space in the main library had become an acute problem as the place was unacceptably over-crowded.

The existing library was designed with a sitting capacity of 1,100 readers. That was when Makerere had less than 3,000 students. Even during my undergraduate
days in the early 1970s, reading space in the Main Library was already a problem, especially during the examination season. Even then, to get a seat, we had to queue very early in the morning. Now, the student population was about ten times more. Besides, the library stock had reached 615,000 books, periodicals, monographs and other collections, and was still growing. The book bank over which the library had custody was also steadily expanding and, with the assistance of the World Bank and the African Virtual University, we established a digital library and more of the ICT was on the way. The scarcity of space was stretching the library resources beyond limit. Unfortunately for James Mugasha and the Library Committee, the University Council had passed a policy that no construction project would be approved unless at least a third of the funds required were available. The council passed the policy to avoid projects stalling and the attendant costly litigation filed by contractors for breach of contract. Mr Sam Byanagwa, the Deputy Secretary who was then in charge of the Project Implementation Office, was in no mood to listen to Mr Mugasha’s pleas. He had seen projects stall due to lack of money and was not prepared to see more. The Institute of Statistics building besides the Faculty of Social sciences was a glaring example. The funds ran out when the building was still at the foundation stage. He stuck to the Council ruling and Mugasha had to look for the extra money. He was advised to put the project on hold until he had accumulated at least a billion shillings on the project’s account. This was an unexpected setback, but it did not deter James Mugasha’s enthusiasm.

During the celebrations to mark Makerere’s Platinum Jubilee in 1997, President Benjamin Mkapa of Tanzania, an old student and a classmate of the Senior Presidential Advisor on Media, Mr John Naggenda in the small single honours English class, was one of the prominent old Makerereans who attended the function held in the Freedom Square. He was in the company of the university’s Chancellor, President Museveni. The library expansion was among the many needs the university presented to the two Heads of State. In his magnanimity and like a true old Makerere boy, President Mkapa made a personal pledge of US$ 15,000 towards the library project and true to his promise, he sent the cheque. Besides auctioning a few items, like a beautiful exotic cow, President Museveni too made a personal pledge in the amount I do not recall. That pledge too was honoured. In spite of this hard fundraising drive, James Mugasha was still far short of the one billion shilling target, but he did not give up; he kept saving and, eventually, he had enough to start. In 2004, the contract was approved and awarded. However, on a rather sad note for Mr Mugasha, by the time work began, he had retired after a cool 23 years at the helm of the University Library Services. He was not there to see the project he had worked so hard for take off. The responsibility fell on the shoulders of his successor, Dr Maria Musoke.

Besides the usual services, the library has a little bindery housed in the basement of the Main Library building. Its main function is to repair and rebind
mutilated and old books and other documents in the library, damaged due to wear and tear. The unit employs a handful of skilled craftsmen and women and is headed by a head binder. Mr J. S. Musoke, a fine artist by training, had been the head binder for as long as I could remember and as far as the University Librarian was concerned, Musoke was quietly doing his job well. The one unintended spin-off that came out of our concerted efforts to revitalise the university was to stimulate staff to yearn for more training. I was overwhelmed by the number of staff members, both academic and non-academic, that were asking me for leave and money to go and study, either abroad or at Makerere. From academic staff, secretaries, custodians and even porters, all wanted to add value to their qualifications and skills. The evening programmes had opened up opportunities for many of them who would ordinarily not have qualified for study leave or funding from the university to study for a degree, a diploma or a certificate of one kind or another. Many were now using their spare time more profitably, by engaging in further studies. It was as if members of staff had realised that the days of magendo were long over and education had recaptured its rightful place in society. Good educational qualifications and skills were now being seen as the key to well-paying jobs and job security. Therefore, I was pleasantly surprised when one day Mr Musoke, the head binder, approached me with a request to allow him go and study for a Master of Arts degree in Fine Art. I was not really convinced that he needed a Masters degree for his current job, so I asked him why he thought that, for his kind of job and at his age, he needed a Masters degree. His answer was simple and honest. He thought that he needed new and modern knowledge and skills to enhance his job performance. I had nothing to add, but let him to go and try his luck. With all the determination he could marshal, he successfully completed the degree, graduated and returned to his job with new ideas.

There were many more members of staff in the library who also seized the opportunity offered by the evening programmes and registered not only for advanced degrees, but also for the undergraduate ones. Few names come to mind here. No doubt, Mr W.O. Okello was an excellent example of the new thinking that was sweeping across the campus. He had been a Library Assistant for ages and was advancing in years. He too did what, a few years ago, was unthinkable and registered for the BLIS degree. After the first degree, he went on to acquire a Masters degree. I suspect that at his age, very few would have wished to go back to school and subject themselves to the rigours of studying, perhaps alongside their sons and daughters. He defied the odds and before long he had acquired the degree and was soon rising through the ranks. There was also Ms E. Sendikaddiwa who graduated with a first class honours Bachelors of Library and Information Science and, by the time I retired, had completed the Masters degree and had registered for a PhD at Makerere. She had also collected a string of certificates and diplomas, including one she obtained from Ulm University in Germany. Others were Mrs
B. Sekabembe, a classmate of Sendikaddiwa; Margaret Namaganda; Constance Okello and Eva Kawalya. I know there were a lot more than space has allowed me to mention. Suffice it to say that although these old university employees, now budding with new qualifications, presented us with a new challenge of having to redesignate them within the university establishment; but I was happy to see so many of them take up the challenge to go back to school to improve their lot.

As an old educator, in them I saw a new breed of Ugandans who were once again putting a very high premium on their education. They were determined to go the extra mile to achieve their goals, regardless of age and other obstacles. I was again happy to have played a small part in facilitating the realisation of their dreams. I was not overly daunted by the fact that at one time we had a graduate sweeper in the East African School of Library and Information Science, a graduate custodian with a second class-upper division BA degree at the Postgraduate Hostel and another at the Faculty of Social Sciences. These were people who had decided to use their spare time to improve on their education and to make up for the opportunity they had lost in the past when the university could only admit a few students. However, before they went for study in the evenings, they had not sought permission or advice from the Vice Chancellor. By going to study for degrees, they had become over-qualified for their current positions and we had nowhere to put them. When Professor Apolo Nsibambi, as Minister of Education and Sports, came to address staff at the university in 1997, this was one of the issues the support staff raised. They accused the university administration for failing to recognise their achievements. Dr Mukwanason Hyuha had a good answer for them: employees did not determine the university’s training needs, rather, the university determined its training needs. Those who had chosen to go for qualifications for which the university had sufficient capacity did so for their own pleasure and personal satisfaction. Therefore, the university was not duty bound to give them automatic promotion, especially when the positions they would be promoted to did not exist or were full. Although the answer seems to have satisfied the Minister, it was an embarrassing situation. It was a price we had to pay for opening up.

While in the past no librarian at Makerere would consider studying for a PhD as a worthwhile thing to do, I was happy to see it happen during my time. Bernard Bazirake paved the way by being the first to study for this degree and complete it successfully. Unfortunately, we could not keep him for long. After serving for a few years, he left Makerere and joined the African Institute for Capacity Development (ICAD) at Juja near Nairobi as an Information Specialist. Dr Maria Musoke who had been the deputy to Mr Mugasha, in charge of the Medical Library at Mulago, followed Dr Bazirake’s example. She had been in the university library service for a long time. Over time, she took interest in gender issues as well. I guess that, in some way, this gave her the inspiration to go and study for the PhD. She took it
at the University of Sheffield in the UK and after completing it, she came back straight to her job. When time came for James Mugasha to throw in the towel and call it a day, she applied for his job and after satisfying the Appointments Board that she was the right person for the job, she was appointed University Librarian in 2005, thus making history by becoming the first Ugandan woman and the first PhD holder to be so appointed at Makerere. She took over from James who had served in that position for over two decades. He too had taken from another long-serving Tucker Lwanga who had been forced to flee the country when both Amin and Milton Obote’s regimes were after his life. By the way, Tucker Lwanga later became a Minister in the Kabaka’s Government at Mengo. I strongly believe that Dr Musoke’s appointment set a precedent which was likely to remain the norm for future appointments to that position.

I recall the time when James Mugasha asked the University Council to regard the posts in the library. He presented the new nomenclature for the various grades of library staff, which at first was rather confusing. We seemed not to have understood the titles James Mugasha was asking the University Council to approve. In fact, the Council almost threw the whole thing out. It was after the University Librarian had provided a clear explanation that the University Council was able to approve the new titles. For example, in the new nomenclature, the post of Assistant Librarian became Librarian I. The real confusion was at the top position. What would the Chief Librarian become? Mugasha’s answer was to change the title of the head librarian from Chief Librarian to University Librarian. When that was sorted out, the rest was easy. The rest became librarians of various grades. Some of us had proposed that, in keeping with modern trends, the Chief Librarian should be called Director of Library Services. Unfortunately, we did not have our way. The University Council went along with what the library had proposed. The nomenclature for all library staff was a tedious exercise with occasional complaints from staff who seemed unhappy with their new job grading. The exercise, however, went smoothly.

Personnel matters aside, when we took over the administration of the university, we found the Main Library building in bad state. It was originally a flat roofed building, a building style quite fashionable in the 50s and 60s but which had become a technical nightmare in the late 70s and 80s when the university ran out of money for general maintenance. The architects who designed the flat-roofed buildings did not take into account the hot, wet and humid tropical climate. I believe they assumed that money for maintenance was plentiful and would always be there. Unfortunately, those assumptions were wrong and the university had to pay a heavy price for their mistakes. Flat roofs require constant care, because as the top water-proofing material keeps ageing, they become more and more susceptible to leaking. Dry concrete suffers from two problems. It is a porous material and susceptible to leaking. Secondly, it has a tendency to retain water for
a long time. The retained water corrodes the reinforcement steel bars, which in turn weakens them. As a result, all university flat-roofed buildings started leaking profusely. In the 1980s, the previous University Administration decided to pitch all flat-roofed buildings with galvanized iron sheets. This was a stop-gap measure as they looked for better solutions. Unfortunately, most of the iron sheets were of a thin gauge and, in a relatively short time, they too started rusting and getting perforated.

Secondly, due to lack of financial resources at the time, there was no attempt to check the structural damage the concrete roof had suffered as a result of the leaks, which had gone on unchecked for many years. We had to face the consequences of the leaking roofs, especially when pieces of concrete detached from the ceiling in one of the staff flats on Luthuli House, belonging to the then Head of the Department of Community Practice, Dr F. W. Ndlobol. Big and heavy chunks of debris fell from the ceiling into his living room. Fortunately, no one was hurt as Dr Ndloboli and his family were out, but it was a gruesome experience. As expected, journalists picked up the story and published it. We were blamed for being negligent and not caring for staff welfare. To compound the situation, we had just bought an official car for the new University Secretary, Mr Avitus Tiberimbasa. That too became an issue. The journalists who wrote the story tried to drive it home that we were putting priority on the wrong things. But as I had been told years before, “when you take over leadership you inherit both its assets and liabilities”. I accepted the blame despite the fact that the problem of the leaking roofs was far more complex to solve than we had previously thought. Lincoln House was a case in point. What most people did not realise was that due to many years of neglect, we were now dealing with a gigantic problem that would cost the university billions of shillings to rectify. Unfortunately, the Government that was supposed to provide the money for maintenance had not heeded the old saying that “a stitch in time saves nine”, and money, and let me hasten to add, saves life too.

Luthuli House was not a unique experience. Due to corrosion, most of the previously flat-roofed buildings had developed serious structural problems of one kind or another in the roofs. This became evident when we started renovating Lincoln House. At first the architects believed that despite the leaks, the roof was still structurally sound. When they started opening it up, they found a badly rotten roof slab, which had to be removed altogether if the integrity of the roof structure had to be maintained. This added more costs to the budget. Because the building was in such a state of disrepair, it cost almost a billion shillings to fix all the problems. Although the university’s finances would not allow for the removal of the entire roof from the Main Library building, the water, which had been percolating through the concrete slab on top for years had damaged the sound-proofing cork on the ceiling. The cork tiles on the floor were also in
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a sorry state and had to be replaced. Water from the leaking roof had damaged the cork tiles on the ceiling, but something else had damaged the sound-proof cork tiles on the floor. The stiletto heels of presumably female staff and students had done most of the damage. Apparently, the soft cork and the sharply pointed stiletto do not make good companions. Although it took the contactor a long time to find the original cork tiles, in the end we managed to replace all old floor and ceiling tiles with new ones. When the Government Treasury was still able to release some money to the university for capital development, we fixed most of the plumbing works and electrical installations in the library that had long broken down or decayed. The Main Library was given a further facelift during the Women’s World Congress of July 2002.

You will recall that I had made a prediction that as the computer technology revolution continued to make the relentless progress, with new breakthroughs and advances never thought possible before, the library, as we know it today would probably be a thing of the past. I was happy to see some of my predictions come true when I was still the Vice Chancellor of Makerere University. Due to the chronic shortage of funds, the university had fallen behind on the subscriptions to the many journals that were once commonplace in the library. This had been a severe handicap to the researchers. Graduate students had no access to current journals and therefore, had difficulty updating literature for their theses. We had to do something drastic to reverse this appalling situation. It was totally unacceptable in a university of such repute as Makerere. When the Government of Uganda negotiated a loan from the African Development Fund in 1987 on behalf of the university, the library had been earmarked as one of the beneficiary units. As we shall see later, the idea back then was to automate the university’s library system. For some reason, however, the negotiations with the bank seemed to have stalled for a while. Nevertheless, as we started thinking about an ICT master plan for the university in the late 1990s, automating the library became a priority once more. Again as we shall later, the Makerere Library Information System (MakLIBIS) was one of the four management information systems I presented to NORAD in 2000, under the Institutional Development Programme. Fortunately, the Swedish Agency for International Development and its research arm, Sida/SAREC, also took keen interest in the library automation project and agreed to co-fund the MakLIBIS. One of the objectives of the MakLIBIS project was to put the entire library stock catalogue in one database that would be available to all users online. This was a mammoth job that required specialised expertise and staff training. Among other donors we approached for support, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, agreed to provide additional funding for the project and pay some of the experts that trained staff. Unexpectedly, MakLIBIS turned out to be one of the biggest projects funded by Makerere’s development partners and the first of the four information systems to come on stream. In addition, Sida/SAREC agreed to pay for the full text on-line journal or e-journal subscriptions, initially
for a period of three years. As a result, Makerere University had automatic access
to over 8,000 journals, the entire stock of the British Library, the University of
Bergen Library and the Cochran Virtual Library, among others.

Most academics do not seem to be divided on the definition of quality
university education, but there seems to be discerning voices as to what constitutes
quality and how it should be measured. One school of opinion strongly believes
that in order to maintain quality, you must control enrolments and ensure that
the available facilities match the student numbers. It goes as far as pointing to
the numerous studies carried out over the years, which clearly indicate a strong
negative correlation between quality education and large student numbers. On
the other hand, some think that there is more to quality than facilities, low
enrolments and sufficient professoriate. They point to the numerous examples
of small universities scattered around the world that have the facilities, the
right number of staff and students, and yet do not come anywhere near some
mega universities in ranking. This school of thought argues that even with large
enrolments, a good university can still offer quality education and that, given the
big population growth rates, there is no way African public universities can avoid
large numbers altogether. So, the best way forward is to confront the problem
imaginatively rather than avoiding it or indulging in lamentations. The key word
is innovation. Given the ever dwindling resources, African university leadership
has to innovate ways of offering better education with less of the traditional
resources. I am one of those who strongly believe that the solution lies in the new
and emerging technologies. While making every effort to improve the traditional
facilities like libraries, laboratories, classrooms and capacity to recruit and retain
high quality staff, African universities have to invest more in ICT and new
education technologies. Initially, the new technologies will be complementary
to the traditional ways universities do things but, in time, they will become the
dominant players in curriculum and service delivery. No doubt, ICT and other
innovative technologies if applied wisely can ease the teaching of big classes,
decongest over-crowded classrooms and campuses and in the same token help
the institution address the issue of declining quality standards.

With well-developed ICT facilities, a professor does not even have to stand
in front of a mob of students in an overcrowded and stuffy lecture to deliver a
lecture. Interactive media takes care of that. A professor can sit in the comfort
of his or her office and teach hundreds of students at the same time scattered in
different locations. He or she can even post the lecture notes and assignment
on the Intranet, if it exists. Technology also makes it possible to mark scripts.
Many textbooks are increasingly becoming available on-line at much lower prices
than the hard copies. The Internet too is now a rich source of information and
a resource of teaching and learning materials. Africa is quickly learning to leap-
frog technology and I see African universities doing the same by exploiting the
The Experience and Recollections from the Faculties, Schools, Institutes and Centres

unprecedented opportunities ICT offers. As the automobile has replaced the horse drawn carriage, so will ICT replace much of the conventional university teaching and learning. Will it be at the cost of personal contact? My answer is probably “Yes” and “No”. Much as every student will not have direct contact with the professor, there will be sufficient personal support of all kinds for students to fall back on.

During my time at Makerere, we had begun to take small steps in that direction, the library being the starting point. Besides its relatively rich collection, the library embarked on a serious ICT programme which had as one of its objectives, to provide Internet and e-mail services to both staff and students. To this end, a local area network (LAN) of 171 points was installed in the Main Library and was constantly upgraded to meet the increasing demand. This was in addition to what in the trade is called the Virtua-ILS (virtual integrated library system), again for use by both staff and students. We had been fortunate to have attracted funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to support some of these initiatives. Besides supporting the MakLIBIS project, the USAID provided funds which facilitated the library’s establishment of a digital repository for the Africa regional courses based in the Department of Political Science and Public Administration. As we shall see later, these courses were being offered as part of a network of universities in Africa, Makerere being one of them, and Tufts University in the USA. Through this initiative, the Main Library was able to acquire a special server to host digital content of the courses, a high speed scanner, as well as video and digital cameras to digitise all the material. In addition, two members of the library staff went to Tufts University in Boston, USA to train in the creation and presentation of the digital contents of these courses. However, as the library acquired more and more of the new technology, it became evident that more power was needed. The existing line was no longer able to deliver enough power to meet the increasing demand. The Main Library needed an additional power line to supplement the existing one, but we did not have the money to pay for it. Sida/SAREC was kind enough to come to our aid again in this regard. Slowly but surely, the library was taking a giant leap from medieval times into the modern age.

As the library embraced ICT and other modern technologies, it became clear to us that the new technology had to be backed with well-trained staff in order to use the technology effectively and efficiently. James Mugasha had an ambitious plan. He wanted every professional librarian working in the University Library to be computer literate and skilled in all aspects of the ICT the library was acquiring. That, in some way, meant that the Librarians had to have a fair knowledge of the software behind the technology. How to do it was the issue. It would require a lot of money to train all professional librarians, especially as many of them did not even have the rudiments of ICT application, let alone ever having used a
computer. Fortunately for James Mugasha, NORAD and Sida/SAREC embraced the idea and promised to provide the necessary funding for staff training. With funding secured, it was now possible to mount end-user ICT training courses for librarians in and outside Uganda. The courses were both short- and long-term.

Outside Uganda, University of Bergen in Norway provided short-term training in information security and inter-library loan systems, while the University of Cape Town in South Africa ran the training on Library Automation, and another university in USA held programmes on Managing the Virtua-ILS. Since a PhD had become a useful degree for the librarian, some of them chose to specialise in various aspects of ICT and other library technologies at the PhD, level as part of the long-term training. For instance, in 2003, two members of the professional library staff went to the Swedish Institute of Library and Information at Boras for their PhD in ICT Application in the Library. At the time of my departure in 2004, the two members of staff were still in Sweden completing their PhDs. NORAD, under the Institutional Development Programme, paid for most of the short-term training in and outside Uganda. It also provided the Main Library with funds to stabilise the erratic power supply that was adversely affecting the new equipment, and for the purchase of some 32 computers for the exclusive use of the library’s professional and administrative staff. At the same time, the Carnegie Corporation of New York paid for the installation of some of the new equipment and the setting up of Local Area Networks in the Main Library and in the science-based sub-libraries at Mulago, Kabanyolo, the Vet School and the School of Education.

With the same Carnegie support, the library acquired a number of centralised CD-Rom servers which the staff and students could access any time of the day through the university’s Wide Area Network, MakNet and an automated document delivery system known as the ARIEL, through which the Makerere University Main Library could access other university libraries worldwide. Closer home, the Uganda Telecommunication Limited (UTL as it is popularly known by the public) also donated 28 computers, which were used to set up a fully networked staff and graduate student-only computer laboratory.

I believe that every person who has studied at Makerere and has ever been in the Main Library must have seen the huge wooden chests of drawers in the reception area. Ever since I first set my foot in the Library as an undergraduate student in July 1970, the chests have changed positions a couple of times. These chests and their contents constitute the entire Main Library catalogue and for many years Mrs Ruth Kamya, the Chief Cataloguer, was in charge of them. Inside these imposing chests of drawers were thousands of printed cards, each representing a book in the library’s collection, with detailed information about every book on the shelves printed on them. The chests were made from high quality attractive hard wood. They were also a showcase of high quality craftsmanship. However,
with the changing times, these once beautiful wooden chests had started looking antiquated and out of place. To say the least, these fit-for-museum pieces of wood and their contents were slowly becoming an eyesore to some of us. In my many journeys around the world, I had seen better things and I was determined to see the whole cataloguing system modernised. As part of the library modernisation process, which we had initiated with donor funding, the entire catalogue was fully automated and could be accessed from any part of the world via the World Wide Web. Although the wooden chests remained where they had always been, they were now more of monuments to the days gone by.

As I conclude what I had to say about the University Library, I was proud to see the library establish collaborative linkages with university libraries abroad much in the same way the academic departments did. At the time of my departure, the library had established links with the University of Bergen Library in Norway, the old Uppsala University in Sweden and the University of Tennessee in the USA. Through the automated system, it became possible for the library to exchange information data and other materials electronically. If all this had amounted to low or falling standards at Makerere, as some have continued to allege, then I must have been walking around with the wrong definition of quality university education in my head. I must admit though that initially not every member of staff, let alone the students, was familiar with the new system. That was the next challenge: to ensure that both staff and students made optimal use of all these modern services we had put in place for their benefit. What had happened in the library was to me nothing short of an outstanding achievement. It was value-addition to the academic wellbeing of the university at its best, and all that was achieved in a space of three years.

As the key fundraiser and ultimately the person responsible for overseeing the successful implementation of the projects in the library and the rest of the university, I could hardly hide my joy about this success story. Admittedly, it was hard work, but much of the credit goes to James Mugasha and his staff. If my colleagues and I have left any legacy behind, the introduction of ICT in the library was no doubt a part of that legacy. However, time will tell whether all that investment was well worth it. Having left behind such a modern ICT infrastructure, I want to believe that James Mugasha too retired a happy and satisfied man. I pray that those who will be coming after us in the years ahead will keep the drive for modernisation and innovation going. Makerere cannot afford to regress.

Faculty of Science – Where it all Started

A short walking distance northwards from the Main Library stands the Faculty of Science, one of the oldest academic units at Makerere. In terms of student numbers and academic opportunities within its BSc programme, the Faculty of
Science is currently the largest among the science-based faculties. This is where I studied and where I started my teaching, research and long administrative career. The car park at the entrance marks the end of the almost one-kilometre-long University Road, which begins at the university’s Main Gate at the south end of the institution. Standing majestically in the round-about island directly opposite the faculty’s car park is a bronze statue of Uganda’s crested crane sitting on her hatching eggs.

Started in 1970 to commemorate the inauguration of Makerere University as a national university, work on the sculpture stalled when money ran out during the difficult days of Idi Amin. The artist, George Kakooza of the Margaret Trowell School of Fine Art, who had been commissioned to craft it, died before completing it. However, by some remarkable coincidence, one of his sons who also studied Fine Art returned from Britain after completing his studies and was interested in completing the work his father left unfinished. When I met him for the first time, he told me that for a long time he had been concerned about his father’s unfinished work. Now that he was a qualified artist in his own right, he believed he could complete the unfinished statute in memory of his late father but he was not sure whether, after more than twenty years, the University was still interested in completing it. If we were interested, he was ready to complete the work, but our problem was where to find the financial resources for the job. Since the statute had been such a glaring eyesore for so long, there was no way I could turn his offer down, although I was not sure we could find the money. Fortunately, the University Bursar who was equally eager to see the statue completed, though belatedly, was able to find money and the young Kakooza managed to finish what his father had started. We were happy to see the bronze statue which had stood unfinished for so long completed and now waiting for the elements to give it the malachite colour typical of old bronze statues.

As one of the old faculties, the Faculty of Science too had had its fair share of the university’s ups and downs. During Makerere’s hey days, the faculty had enjoyed some glorious moments, only to be cut short by the unfortunate events that befell the country in the 1971. However, as the university begun to recover, those long lost glorious times were also slowly on their way back. Before the chaos that befell the country following the coup of 1971, all the departments in the faculty used to be a hive of serious and high quality research, with an impressive publication output; and although research output somehow declined in the difficult years of the ’70s and part of the ’80s, it never quite fizzled out altogether. In fact, by the time I left the university in 2004, the faculty was once again one of the prolific centres of research at Makerere. It also boasted of an array of buildings, some almost as old as the university itself and some quite new. The Department of Geology, located behind the Math-Science building and the Goodman Laboratory which now houses the Institute of Environment and Natural
Resources, were some of the oldest buildings in the faculty and the university as whole, some of them dating back to the 1920s and 1930s. The impressive and imposing JICA building located in what used to be the Faculty of Agriculture car park is one of the latest additions. However, despite the many graduates it had produced over the years, the faculty had never had a Ugandan (or an African for that matter) as Head of Department until 1969 when Professor William Banage was appointed Head of the Department of Zoology, followed by Professor John Ilukor as Head of Physics in 1971. It took another five or so years before John Ilukor was appointed its first Ugandan dean in 1974. By then, William Banage had fled into exile. John Ilukor was followed by the mathematical logician, Jakery Oker, who served for a short while before going into exile. By then, most of the expatriate professors had left the university. Professor Albert James Lutalo Bosa, a biochemist and now Vice Chancellor of Kyambogo University took over the reins from Dr Jekeri Okee. Professor Paul Mugambi, a mathematician, was the fourth Ugandan to head the faculty as dean. He was followed by another mathematician, Professor Livingstone Serwadda Luboobi, who later succeeded me as Makerere’s ninth Vice Chancellor. When he completed his term after eight years, Professor Hannington Oryem Origa, a botanist took over.

The Faculty of Science also boasts of another first. It was the first faculty in the university to produce two Vice Chancellors in succession. In all, it has so far produced four Vice Chancellors; two for Makerere (Ssebuwufu and Luboobi), one for Kyambogo (Lutalao Bosa) and one for Busitema (Mary Nakandha Okwakol, the zoologist). To my recollection, Dr Mary Okwakol was the first Ugandan woman to be appointed full professor in the faculty. No doubt, that is a record to be proud of. The Faculty of Medicine and the School of Education come a close second. Each has produced two Vice Chancellors for Makerere. Medicine had Professors Joseph Lutwama and George Kirya, while the School of Education had Asavia Wandira and William Sentenza Kajubi. The Faculty of Veterinary Medicine has also produced two, but for the outside – Professor Fred Kayanja, the founding Vice Chancellor of Mbarara University of Science and Technology and Dr Penmog Nyeko, the first Vice Chancellor of Gulu University. The rest of the faculties are yet to produce a Vice Chancellor for Makerere.

Metaphorically speaking, the faculties that have not yet had a share of the topmost executive position in the university could borrow a leaf from the Baganda and their kingdom. In the evolution of the Buganda Kingdom, the Baganda realised early that there was a danger inherent in the practice allowing one out of the 50 or so clans to monopolise the monarchy, because that would make the lucky clan believe it was the ruling clan and therefore the superior clan the rest would be subservient to it. The ruling clan, so they argued, would be too powerful and would dominate, and possibly terrorise, the rest of the clans with impunity. To overcome this problem, they chose to open up the throne
to all clans. However, for this to happen, the Baganda made an exception to their long-cherished patrilineal inheritance tradition, which dictated that all children belonged to their father's clan. However, the king's children, the princes and princesses belonged to their mother's clan, thus making the royal family matrilineal. This opened up the opportunity and possibility for every clan to produce a king. The catch was that for a clan to have one of their own on the throne, they had to ensure that the reigning king took one of their daughters for a wife. The other catch was that the girl had to be stunningly beautiful to attract the king's eye. It was then up to the girl to bear a son for the king. Since the prince inherited the mother's totem, when he became king the clan had every reason to celebrate for having produced a king. Likewise, for the faculties that have yet to produce a Vice Chancellor for Makerere, all they have to do is to nurture people with the kind of attributes required of a Vice Chancellor and hope that when the time comes to choose a new Vice Chancellor, their person makes the best impression on the Search Committee, the Senate, the University Council and, of course the Chancellor, who has the final say in the appointment of a Vice Chancellor. Under the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act of 2001, which replaced the Makerere University Act of 1970, such a scenario is now possible.

The faculty's fortunes turned for the better when the university put it on the list of the faculties that were to benefit from the rehabilitation grant which the European Union had extended to the university in the early 1990s. The massive EU-funded rehabilitation programme saw many of the faculty's buildings, some in a near-dilapidated state, receive a facelift they had not had in decades. Although the faculty was in need of additional space, the EU grant was for rehabilitation only. As we have seen, the JICA building was the only new building in the Faculty of Science. As Vice Chancellor and an ex-member of staff of the faculty, I toyed with the idea of soliciting funds for my old faculty for years without success. I must admit that was one of my glaring failures. My good donors could not give me money to put up another building in the Faculty of Science when there were other far more needy faculties. The best I could do was to facelift a few buildings, particularly during the Women's Congress of 2002.

My failure notwithstanding, by the time I took over as Vice Chancellor in 1993, most of the buildings in the faculty were in reasonable shape, having received a facelift a few years earlier. All flat roofs had been properly pitched with thick gauge iron sheets and the structural damage to the ceiling slabs, caused by the leaking roofs, had been taken care of. Even the moss that had found a home on the red burnt clay tiles on the roof of the old Zoology building had been washed off. However, for some reason, the Physics building, the Goodman Laboratory, the Cow Shed and the old Department of Geology stores had been excluded from the EU-funded rehabilitation. I never quite understood why this was so. I suspect
that they had been left out either because they were considered too old to spend money on or because they already had pitched roofs and, unlike the flat-roofed buildings, were not at imminent risk of collapsing. It was also possibly true that budget over-run was the real reason for their exclusion though no one could tell.

On his first official visit to the Faculty of Science in 1994 or thereabout, I recall Dr (now Professor) Yusuto Kaahwa, then Head of Physics Department, taking me around the building. I could clearly see that the building needed some urgent attention. The exterior had not received a single coat of paint in decades. Small cracks had developed in some parts of the building and the flat-topped eaves were leaking, in addition to many other minor problems that had to be fixed. I promised to do something as soon as I could but, frankly, I was not sure where the money would come from. The Goodman Laboratory, at that time, was shared between Geology and Zoology; the Cow Shed and the Geology stores had to wait for the new developments that came later. As luck would have it, the Ministry of Finance had not yet frozen the university’s capital budget, and trickles of money were still coming in. With funds from the small capital development budget, we were able to make good on our promise to have these buildings also rehabilitated.

The Physics building was in the worst state of disrepair and yet it was the only building the department had, so it came first on our priority list. In fact, it was saved in the nick of time because, in the 1996/97 financial year, the Ministry of Finance froze the university’s capital budget, save for few minor items; and that marked the end of our efforts to rehabilitate the remaining buildings there until much later under new initiatives. For the Goodman Laboratory, the much needed repairs came when it changed hands from the Departments of Geology and Zoology respectively to the new Institute of Environment and Natural Resources.

Dr Eldad Tukahirwa, the first Director of the Makerere University Institute of Environment and Natural Resources (MUIENR), had been busy cultivating new friends for his young institute. The institute had outgrown the small space which as a rookie Head of Department, I had given to them in the Department of Chemistry in 1987. The enrolment on the new MSc in Environmental Science programme was steadily growing. At the same time, the institute was recruiting more staff who needed offices, laboratories and lecture rooms. Back then, I had given them the two-in-one office, previously occupied by the UNDP/UNESCO Chief Technical Advisor in the main Chemistry building to kick-start the young institute. Now, the rapidly growing institute was in dire need of additional space and the former Director, Dr Eldad Tukahirwa, was constantly asking me to find him space for his institute. It was not easy to find free space within the Faculty of Science, as every building there was fully utilised. The only building I could think of was the Goodman Laboratory. The question was whether we would be able to persuade the Geology and Zoology Departments to surrender their old building to MUIENR; and supposing they did, where would the money to
repair it come from? Since I was not directly responsible for space allocation, I was about to offload the problem to the Vice Chancellor, Professor Justin Epelu Opio, the man in charge of space allocation, for an answer. But just before I did, Dr Tukahirwa came back to me with very good news. The USAID had promised him a grant, part of which he could use to renovate any old building I could find for him. As much as the news of the USAID grant was good news, I had to tell him that I could not find a free old building. As if we were of like mind, he suggested the Goodman Laboratory. I warned him that convincing both Geology and Zoology to give him the laboratory would be a hard drive, indeed a hard bargain. Understandably so, departments did not give up their space easily when they too were under pressure for additional space. I thought he was asking for the impossible.

Although Eldad Tukahirwa had come to MUIENR from Zoology, he was now seen as an outsider by the department. He hardly had any say or influence there anymore. There was no way he could convince his former colleagues to give up the Goodman Laboratory. Nevertheless, we decided to test the waters. I told him, without promising anything, that I would discuss his request with the heads of the two departments. Initially, when I floated the idea to the two heads, it looked like I was taking a leap in the dark; but as we continued talking, the impossible began to look possible. Geology was not much of a problem, after all the most of the department had shifted to the new JICA building. Zoology was the harder nut to crack. Although Dr Boniface Makanga, the Head of Zoology was not totally opposed to the idea of giving up the laboratory, he had to sell our request to his colleagues and that was not going to be easy. As Head of Department, he had to convince his colleagues that giving up the Goodman Laboratory was the right thing to do when they too needed it for teaching and students laboratory work. Makanga found himself in a real dilemma. I also realised that, by imposing Tukahirwa’s request on him, I risked losing an old time good friend. Makanga and I had been buddies for a long time and we had weathered the hard times together. Now here I was, putting pressure on him to give up one of their assets in return for nothing. Was that a sensible thing to do? Some of his colleagues were least amused by what they saw as an encroachment on the few assets their department had. Fortunately, after some tough discussions in the department, we reached an amicable understanding. Zoology agreed to relinquish its wing in the Goodman Laboratory to Tukahirwa’s young institute. Now that he had now found the perfect old building he was looking for and had the money to rehabilitate it, all we had to do was to put Tukahirwa’s proposal before the University Council, which owns all university assets, for consideration and approval.

The University Council allocated the entire Goodman building to MUIENR. That freed the space the institute was occupying in the Chemistry Department. As much as the transfer of the Zoology part of the Goodman Laboratory to
MUIENR was an amicable decision within his department, Dr Makanga was still accused by some of selling out and failing to stand firm against my pressure. I also lost a friend or two in Zoology. In fact, I heard some bizarre and unfortunate stories told about me by some members of staff there, some of them quite senior, that I was the most corrupt Vice Chancellor they had ever known. True or false, that happened to be the impression this episode created in the minds of some members of staff there. I suppose it is the kind of risks associated with the job of Vice Chancellor, or any manager for that matter. As a manager, you cannot please everyone all the time. When you are a leader, you sometimes have to make unpopular but essential decisions. True to Dr Tukahirwa’s word, the money for rehabilitation came and, before long, the Goodman building was looking as good as new with offices, a small chemical laboratory, computer rooms, GIS rooms, a library as well as student study rooms. The disused animal yard behind the Goodman building was turned into a parking lot and stores. The monkeys the Department of Zoology used to keep there for experimental purposes had escaped into the wild in the 1970s and had become a menace at the Vice Chancellor’s residence. From the animal yard, the monkeys found a new home in the small forest below the Vice Chancellor’s Lodge, the only remaining portion of an indigenous tropical forest at Makerere. There they settled and started fending for themselves, feeding mostly on the Vice Chancellor’s food and fruits in the compound. Some of them had become so daring that they could enter the kitchen and grab whatever food they could find, including bread and rice. Even the loud barks of our dog could not scare them away.

The transfer of the Goodman Laboratory to MUIENR meant that the institute now had a home of its own while still being part of the Faculty of Science; autonomy came later. However, shortly after the institute had moved into the new premises came the bad news that Dr Tukahirwa, the man who had worked so hard to get the institute off the ground and had found money to rehabilitate the Goodman Laboratory, was leaving Makerere for a regional job with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), based in Nairobi. Tukahirwa’s departure was most unexpected and so took us by surprise. Moreover, he was resigning shortly after putting in his papers for promotion to the rank of full professor and, by the look of things, the process was proceeding fast and in his favour. He had met all the requirements for the promotion. Unfortunately, he did not wait for this promotion and this was to his own undoing because the process had to be halted when he resigned. Given the fact that he got his PhD in Entomology from the University of Cambridge and that he had an excellent track record at Makerere, it was not surprising that an organisation like IUCN could spot him; and although we were losing him, we were happy to see one of our own appointed to such a high profile international position. We wished him the best of luck in his new position in Nairobi.
Naturally, the vacuum left by Dr Tukahirwa’s departure had to be filled quickly. As could rightly be guessed, the replacement also came from Zoology. Dr. Pantaleo Kasoma (or PMB as we used to call him), also a Cambridge PhD graduate, was the kind of person we thought could equally steer the young institute and as it turned out, we did not make a bad choice. Most of the developments that took place in the institute after Tukahirwa’s departure were all Kasoma’s effort. A hard worker, PMB was as enthusiastic about the job as Eldad Tukahirwa was. For both Tukahirwa and Kasoma, Professor Derrick Pomeroy was there to assist as Deputy Director. With Kasoma now in control, Tukahirwa’s sudden departure had no adverse effect on the progress of the young institute.

A few years later, the Makerere University Biological Field Station (MUBFS) based in Kibale Forest National Park in Kabarole District, also came under the management of the institute. Originally, it had been run by the Dean of Science in conjunction with the Zoological Society of New York, with most of the funding provided by the USAID. For many years, students from Harvard University in the USA had been visiting the Field Station to study primates in the wild. The Americans liked the facility so much that one of the first residents when the field opened was a Harvard scholar from the Harvard Museum of Natural History. Makerere University had two resident members of staff from the Faculty of Science, Dr Gilbert Isabirye Basuuta of the Zoology Department and Dr John Kasenene from the Botany Department. For a long time, Dr Gilbert Basuuta Isabirye acted as Director of the Station, while John Kasenene acted as Deputy Director. However, the time came when we thought the two men should change roles. This gave a chance to Dr Kasenene, a native of Kabarole District, to act as Director with Isabirye as his deputy. The Makerere University Biological Field Station had a Board of its own, chaired by the Deputy Vice Chancellor, which included representation from the then Department of Forestry, among others. Over the years, the facility had become a world-class centre of research on primates generally, and in particular the chimpanzees. In fact, the station had become very popular among students and researchers from Europe and the USA, as well as Makerere staff and students. Long before Dr Oryem Origa became full Professor of Botany and Dean of Science, he had spent most of his research time there as a PhD student on studying the physiology of the wild coffee bean germination.

Wild coffee is plentiful in the Kibale National Park forest and forms part of the diet of the resident primates. The station was a well-organised, totally self-sustaining facility, located at the fringes of Kibale Forest Reserve which later became the Kibale National Park away from civilisation. It was located next to the offices and residences of the Forest Department staff who later joined the Kibale National Park establishment. To our dismay, when Kibale forest was declared a national park, the Uganda National Parks Trust wanted to kick us out
of our station and take over the premises. We had to bargain hard to retain it as a Makerere University facility. As the volume of work kept piling, we decided to send in two more resident members of staff, an accountant and an administrative assistant, to assist Dr Isabirye Basuuta and Dr Kasenene with the administrative and financial duties. Initially, the station relied on solar panels for its electricity supply, but when we realised that the power output was inadequate for all its growing needs, we had to find a way of extending the power mains from Kabarole to the station. We were lucky to have found the money.

Like the Faculty of Social Sciences, the Faculty of Science had incubated several academic units over the years and as soon as they reached sufficient academic maturity, they broke away from the faculty and became autonomous entities. We came across some examples earlier. During my time as Vice Chancellor, the Institute of Environment and Natural Resources also joined the growing list of the academic units the Faculty of Science had nurtured to maturity and which had gone their separate ways. However, this time the separation did not come easy. For MUIENR, the road to full autonomy was long and bumpy, involving hard and sometimes frustrating negotiations between the institute and the faculty; understandably so because the faculty had recently lost the Institute of Computer Science. In the 1970s, it had lost the Institute of Statistics and Applied Economics and it seemed this time the faculty was in no mood to relinquish MUIENR and, with it, MUBFS. I guess some people there had had enough of the break-aways. It was as if they were saying that, this time, we are determined to hold on to our institute and our Field Station at Kibale at all costs.

As much as the resistance was real and understandable, the faculty had to comply with the University Council’s policy which required all institutes operating under the faculties that wished to become autonomous to do so. After several meetings in the faculty, an agreement was reached and the necessary documentation done and presented to Senate for consideration. Senate wasted no time. It recommended to Council that MUIENR be granted full autonomy. The University Council agreed with the Senate recommendation and, in the academic year 2001/2002, MUIENR became an independent institute with its own Faculty Board and its Director took his seat as a full member of the University Senate. Panta Kasoma had done his legwork well. However, as a department under the Faculty of Science, the small establishment it had been allocated many years ago had become a serious sticking. The Director wanted more posts, but as a department which it was equivalent to before it became an autonomous institute, the Establishment and Administration Committee of Council had found it difficult to justify the extra posts, especially so when some positions had remained unfilled since they were established.

Autonomy meant that the institute was now free to create new and specialised units or departments, each with its own establishment. Before it was granted
autonomy, MUIENR had no undergraduate degree programmes. It was essentially a research and postgraduate training institute. Besides the PhD, the consultancy and advisory services and a few Postgraduate Diplomas it was running only one Masters degree programme in Environmental Science. Now autonomous, it was ready to roll out new programmes.

Although MUIENR had a slow start in 1987, by the late 1990s it had come close to being a household name in the environmental circles. It now had more staff and some had gone out for their PhDs in far places like the Institute of Hydraulic and Environmental Engineering (IHE) in Deft in the Netherlands. The current Director, Dr Frank Kansiime, is one of the graduates of the Delft-based UNESCO-IHE. I also recall a few members of staff in the institute who, for a long time, seemed to have lost appetite for the PhD, perhaps for lack of the opportunity, deciding to go for it. Dr Eliezar Kateyo is a case in point. After several years of teaching and doing research, he finally obtained his PhD in 1999.

Several organisations, both public and private, were constantly consulting the institute on the various aspects of environmental management and protection. When the Government of Uganda made the protection of the environment a top priority, all major development projects had to be subjected to an environmental impact assessment (or EIA as it is popularly called in the trade) before they were implemented. The institute had become a key player in this area and as the demand for the EIA services grew, it decided to introduce a one-year Postgraduate Diploma in Environmental Impact Assessment to train specialists in this area. It also worked closely with the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA), of which I was the Board of Directors Chairman for six years. Perhaps less known to the public was the institute’s contribution to the protection of the wetlands nationwide. Wetlands gained prominence in Uganda after the institute carried out research that demonstrated that wetlands were critical to the wellbeing of the environment and to the ecosystems they supported. Paul Mafabi was a pioneer student in this field and, after his MSc, he joined the former Department of the Environment, which was later elevated to a full ministry. When the Government restructured and streamlined the ministries, Environment went back to its original status as one of the units making up the new Ministry of Lands, Water and Environment. Mafabi stuck in. He saw to the enactment of the Wetlands Act by the Parliament of Uganda, which NEMA was mandated to implement, and the setting up of a Wetlands Division within the ministry. There are many other areas where MUIENR has played, and continues to play, a key role. Most of the District Environmental Officers dotted around the country have had their graduate training in the institute. The once two-man and two-office institute that begun its life in the Department of Chemistry in 1987 had succeeded beyond our wildest dreams. I was happy to have provided the cradle when I had just assumed the headship of the department.
Makerere University is an institution that never runs out of friends. As the institute expanded, some development partners noticed and began to take a keen interest in its activities. As seen before, USAID was one of them. The other was the Danish Agency for International Development (DANIDA). The Danes, through DANIDA, kicked in support for the study of the genetic mapping up of Uganda's wild life. In broad terms, the project aimed at establishing the diversity of the genetic pool of some key animals in Uganda's National Parks. As we now know, it is possible to identify animal and plant species, and determine how different species are from one another, using the relatively young science of Genetics and Molecular Biology. It was an ambitious research project that was likely to go on for many years.

DANIDA made it possible for MUIENC to acquire a state-of-the-art Molecular Biology laboratory for this and other projects. The Wild Life Genetics project relied heavily on the tools of Molecular Biology. Besides Professor Lubega's Molecular Biology laboratory in the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, the university had no other Molecular Biology laboratory where this kind of work could be done. Lubega's laboratory was set up for a different type of research and therefore could not accommodate a project of this nature. We had to set up one for MUIENC. DANIDA had promised to provide the funds to renovate an old building, if we could identify one, and to equip the laboratory. However, as a policy, it could not provide funds for constructing a new building. Like Charles Dickens' Oliver Twist of the old, the Director and his staff came back to lobby for more space. Frankly, this time, I had nothing to offer. I had exhausted all options and the university did not have money for constructing a new laboratory. I almost told Director Kasoma that if DANIDA was not willing to give them money for a new building, they should forget the project, but I clearly understood the kind of repercussions such a decision would have had on our donor community. The university still needed their support. An incident one donor experienced with the university administration could have had a ripple effect on the rest, so I quickly backed off the idea of looking around for another old structure and braced myself for another war with my colleagues at the Faculty of Science.

After scouting around, we identified one small old building in the Faculty of Science complex. As could rightly be guessed again, it was the Department of Zoology's cow shed, so called because of its odd shape. It was located between Physics and the Goodman building, which was now home to MUIENC. The cow shed was roofed with asbestos in the years when asbestos was still a fashionable roofing material. After the bruises Dr Makanga and I had sustained over the Goodman building, I had reason to tread very carefully. I did not want to antagonise my colleagues in Zoology again any more than was necessary. We had to convince them that the new Molecular Biology laboratory would be open to them too. My colleagues proved me wrong. My sixth sense told me
that they gave in easily either because they did not want to fight the university administration any more or they saw real value in the new laboratory. Whatever was the case, I was grateful they spared me nasty words after all as, to some, I was a corrupt man. The University Council handed over the cow shed to MUIENR and renovation began almost immediately. When the equipment started arriving, we had another problem on our hands. We had to find money to pay the taxes the Uganda Revenue Authority (URA) had levied on them. Mr Ben Byambazi, the University Bursar struggled hard to find the money. In fact, taxes had become a real problem for the university. Because we did not always have ready money to pay the taxes and the tax exemption the university used to enjoy had been withdrawn, it had become too difficult to clear goods through customs. The consequence was the unnecessarily long delays in getting vital project supplies out of the bonded warehouses. There were times we had no money at all and yet the URA was insisting that it could only release the goods after we had paid the taxes. Some of the supplies were sensitive reagents like enzymes or radio isotopes with very short half-life, which required quick clearance or being kept frozen to prevent them from denaturing. On many occasions, the URA had released them when they were already denatured or expired. It was always a frustrating struggle to get goods out of Entebbe Airport. Finally, and after a lot of hassle, every piece of equipment was delivered and installed. I was more than pleased when I was invited to commission the new Molecular Biology laboratory and to see some of the exciting research work done there by both staff and PhD students. I was equally happy to see the MUIENR staff working with professors and other researchers at the University of Copenhagen in Denmark on the project.

As seen earlier, there was a time when many departments in the Faculty of Science and the university as a whole did not have a single Masters degree by course work and thesis. For many years, staff shortages, equipment and other necessary logistics could not allow the science-based faculty to mount taught postgraduate programmes. In fact, the Faculty of Science was very slow to offer taught MSc degrees. Even the MSc degrees by thesis alone were being offered on a limited scale as most of the equipment in departments was old, obsolete or had long broken down and could not be repaired. Even under the old system when a Masters degree award was based on a research thesis alone, there were departments within the Faculty of Science that had never produced an MSc graduate even though they had been around for a while. However, all that was about to change in the 1990s and beyond. The university’s changing fortunes were giving impetus to every department to mount a postgraduate degree programme. As we shall see later, the Faculty of Science was one of the major beneficiaries of the Norwegian Programme for Development, Research and Education (NUFU) assistance to the university. NUFU provided a lot of new equipment for research and teaching. Additional new equipment came from the loan the Government of Uganda had secured from the African Development Bank. The university too found some
money and augmented the efforts of NUFU and the Government, but years of neglect made whatever new equipment coming in just a drop in the ocean. To modernise all laboratories in the faculty, the cost ran into millions of dollars. To compound the problem further, very few donors had interest in supporting pure sciences. Many donors could not link the pure sciences to national development. As much as I tried to convince my development partners to extend support to the Faculty of Science, I was just pulling blanks. Pure sciences were hard to sell, yet they are the foundation for all the applied sciences. Nevertheless, with the little new equipment and some of the old ones that were still in good working condition, the opportunity for research and graduate training was not lost on the faculty.

The numerous linkages the faculty had forged with some universities abroad in the recent years, particularly with the Norwegian universities made it possible for its staff to collaborate with colleagues abroad on joint research projects and to spend time doing part of their work which required sophisticated equipment in the laboratories of those universities. The university's policy to peg promotion on publications added more impetus to the faculty's research activities. Here, I shall mention a few examples to illustrate the point. The Solid State group in the Department of Physics, under Professor Yusto Kaahwa, built a strong research programme on thin films.

The Energy group in the same department had also developed a strong research programme on renewable energy and some members of this research group were collaborating with the old University of Uppsala in Sweden. Dr Tom Otiti’s PhD was based on this collaborative research. Equally exciting work was coming out of the Nuclear Physics group. Dr Aki Sophel Kisolo’s work led to the award of a Makerere University PhD in Physics in 2003.

Geophysics is not a discipline with a strong appeal amongst postgraduate students, but a very important one, especially in mineral exploration and seismology – the science associated with earthquakes. Dr Ezra Twesigomwe’s research work was mainly in this field. He is one of the few geophysicists Uganda has and, for his PhD which he obtained in 1998, he made extensive use of the good facilities of the University of Bergen in Norway. Dr Eric Muchunguzi, now at Kyambogo University, was another one of those students who did outstanding work. His PhD research was on “The Application of Optical Activity and the Faraday Effect to the Analysis of the Quality of Vegetable and Mineral Oil”. In fact, the oil industry took a keen interest in his work. By the time I left Makerere in 2004, he was trying to patent his discovery. Part of this work was done in the Physics Department at Makerere under the watchful eye of Professor Yusto Kaahwa and at the University of Bergen in Norway in Professor E. A. Hammer’s laboratory. Professor Kaahwa had wanted to continue with this work, but lacked a vital piece of equipment – a tenable laser – and had asked me if I could help him.
get one. I thought I had found him some money to buy one but unfortunately, for one reason or other, I was let down by my colleagues in the Purchasing Department. I left the university before the equipment was delivered to him.

Having been an active researcher at some point in my career and knowing its critical importance in an academic institution, research was something I took very seriously. In fact, whenever I could find the time, I tried to assist some graduate students with their research. Dr George Nyakairu, an Industrial Chemistry graduate, was one of Professor Kaahwa’s graduate students I assisted. After his MSc at Makerere, he went to Austria for his doctorate. His research on clays had been my research interest for many years. He successfully completed his MSc in a relatively short time and together with his supervisor, published a couple of papers. It was indeed gratifying for me to see the Department of Physics which, for several years had almost given up active and serious research, bounce back in such a dramatic way. Interestingly, I could not recall the first time the Physics Department at Makerere graduated a PhD student since its establishment. I strongly suspect that the first PhD ever from that department was awarded in the late 1990s. It was equally gratifying to note that, in spite of the low pay, insufficient funding, inadequate laboratory space and limited equipment, the academic environment in this old department in the faculty and university, which had been host to several outstanding physicists in the past, had become conducive again for some serious research work. We had even managed to attract Dr Peter Kwizera, a year mate of mine when both of us were undergraduates at the beginning of the 1970s, from Nairobi and Dar es Salaam where he had spent most of his working life, back to his old department. Peter Kwizera was one of the very few Ugandans who took their PhDs at the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in the USA. In fact, he could well be the first and the only Ugandan so far to have obtained a PhD in Physics from MIT.

Unfortunately, he did not stay for long. However, his return was a good signal that the situation at Makerere was steadily changing for the better. By the academic year 2001/2002, the department was boasting of three full professors and eight PhDs while a few other staff members were furthering their studies for higher qualifications.

For a long time, I had known many colleagues in the Physics Department, some with first class honours BSc in Physics, obtained as far back as 1972, who had missed out on the scholarships to study abroad for their advanced degrees and had long shelved the idea of advancing on to the PhD. The hopeless state of affairs that had prevailed in the university for so long had pushed them too far into a state of despair that had made them lose hope. It was as if they had resigned to their fate. They had stopped looking beyond their MScs, obtained several decades back. Dr Odong Edimu (now deceased) was one of those frustrated brilliant minds. He had graduated from Makerere University in 1972 with a first class
honours BSc degree in Physics. After graduation, the university had recruited him as a Special Assistant. When Professor Ilukor returned from the University of Uppsala, he took him on as an MSc student together with his classmate, Okot Uma, who had also graduated with first class honours. I believe their research had to do with radiation Physics and radio isotopes. Immediately after completing their MSc, both were appointed full lecturers. However, in the mid-1980s, Okot Uma quit academic Physics, left Makerere and joined the Commonwealth Secretariat in London. Odong Edim chose to stay, but never advanced beyond the rank of lecturer, because he was not publishing anything. It seemed he had also given up all hope of registering for a PhD, either at Makerere or abroad. It was, therefore, a pleasant surprise for me to see him register for a Makerere PhD. In spite of his fairly advanced age and family commitments, he never lost the academic flair he had exhibited as an undergraduate student. Before long, he had completed his thesis and defended it to the satisfaction of the examiners and was ready to graduate. Unfortunately, shortly before he was due to graduate in 2002, he fell ill and was admitted to Mulago. Sadly, he died a few days to his graduation. He was buried on the day he was supposed to graduate at his ancestral home in the Soroti District. His untimely death shook us all. I could not help thinking that at that rate, death was simply making a mockery of our human resources capacity building efforts. Odong Edim’s death came as a rude shock to me, due in part to the fact that I had not known about his illness until he was admitted at Mulago. His death robbed Makerere University of a brilliant physicist and a man of incredibly pleasant personality with a booming laughter as his trademark.

Besides Odong Edim, the department had already lost two members of staff in a short span of time, including the long-serving John Ilukor, the first Ugandan Professor of Physics at Makerere and the first African to head the department. Professor Ilukor’s main research interest had been in Microwave Radiation. For several years, he was Uganda’s Radiation Safety Officer in charge of the National Radiation Safety Laboratory, which was also housed in the Department of Physics at Makerere. The death of Professor John Ilukor was another shocking blow which disrupted the work of the Microwave group. Fortunately, it did little to dampen the department’s new found spirit for research.

Modern electronics was one of those disciplines any self-respecting Physics Department could ill afford to ignore. The ICT and most of modern technology is deeply rooted in electronics. Sadly, time came when the teaching of electronics at Makerere was more of theory and very much less in practice. The Physics Department no longer had modern equipment to teach the discipline effectively. For instance, in spite of the presence of two excellent Chief Technicians, John Mugerwa and the late Kabuza, capable of repairing them, the few oscilloscopes the department had had broken down beyond repair for lack of spares. With advances in integrated and digital circuits, even the few that were still in working
condition had become obsolete. Fortunately, with the Norwegian assistance, the department was able to re-equip its electronics laboratory. In 1988, Dr Andrea Lilethum, a Professor of Physics at the University of Bergen in Norway visited Makerere University on what could be best described as “a journey of discovery”. He was appalled to find the Department of Physics in such a sorry state. When he went back to Norway, he started soliciting equipment for the department. He wanted the teaching of electronics to be given the due prominence it deserved. Most of the new equipment he donated went to the electronics laboratory. With the new equipment, it was now possible for the department to teach practical electronics once again. Professor Lilethum was instrumental in making sure that Makerere University was among the African universities to benefit from the Norwegian Programme for Development, Research and Education (NUFU) programme when it began in 1991.

The Department of Physics also scored another first. It was the first department in the Faculty of Science to have had three full professors at the same time: John Ilukor, Eldad Banda and Yusto Kaahwa. I remember having collaborated briefly with Professor Banda on his work on “The Electronic Spectroscopy of Transition Metal Compounds in the Solid State”, out of which he published a paper. He had carried out part of this work at the University of Bristol in the UK. I believe Professor Banda was the first member of staff from the Faculty of Science to have a book, Electricity and Magnetism, published by Makerere University Press in 1996.

To mark the UNESCO Science Day 2005, Ms Anastasia Nakkazi, the former Secretary General of the Uganda National Commission for UNESCO requested Makerere University to organise a public science exhibition. The Faculty of Science agreed to organise one in the premises of the Chemistry Department. Although the notice was short, most departments responded positively. It was an excellent display of the ongoing research in the faculty, which included various exhibits, recent publications and well-designed posters. The Physics Department was one of the departments which participated actively in the exhibition and put on an impressive array of posters and reprints of their recent papers. Dr J. M. Ngaboyisonga, who had taken over from Dr Ezra Twesigomwe as Head of Department earlier, was at hand to explain all the Physics involved. For me, this impressive exhibition which the faculty was able to organise at very short notice, was a window on the Faculty of Science’s research efforts in recent years and offered the public a unique opportunity to see what the university was doing in the field of science research. On a purely selfish note, I was happy to see one of my PhD students, Isaak Tebandeke Mukasa, exhibit the preliminary results of our work on bleaching clays. Ms Nakkazi, who was the Guest of Honour at the day’s celebrations was equally impressed and commended the faculty’s efforts. The exhibition was a surprise to most people who had been under the impression that science research at Makerere was long dead. Indeed, research at
Makerere was once again very much alive. However, by the time I left Makerere, Theoretical Physics was the one group that was yet to come fully on board. After the death of Dr Bakesigaki in the late 1970s, Dr Ezra Mugambe was the only Theoretical Physics specialist the department had. A graduate of the California Institute of Technology (or Caltech as it is popularly known), where he studied for his undergraduate degree and Balliol College of Oxford University, where he took his DPhil, Dr Mugambe is one of the few Ugandans (if not the only one in the country) who were well grounded in Theoretical Physics. So, he was quite an asset to the department. My guess was that the university's improving computing facilities and easy access to the latest journals would make it possible for the Theoretical Physics group to advance its research work.

As a young student at Namilyango College in the 1960s, I remember reading an interesting article written for the school magazine by Michael Nsereko, one of the brightest students to have studied at Namilyango. In the article, Nsereko had referred to Mathematics as the Queen of the Sciences, and the foundation of Applied Mathematics. Nsereko's article helped open my eyes to the strong link that existed between Science and Mathematics. However, at the time, I could only see the link between Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry. I could not see how Biology and Mathematics were interlinked. To me, Biology seemed to be the least mathematical of all the science disciplines. Beyond some statistical inferences one came across in some Biology textbooks, there appeared to be very little in common between the two disciplines. At Higher School Certificate (or "A" Level as we now know it), most science students, who were not very strong in Mathematics tended to opt for Biology; the exceptions being those who were good in Mathematics but wanted to pursue a career in Medicine or Veterinary Medicine. The link between Biology and Mathematics became obvious to me many years later, largely through the work of Professor Livingstone Luboobi in Biomathematics, which clearly demonstrated that even in the biological sciences, Mathematics and its sub-branch of Statistics had as much role to play as they did in the physical sciences. I then realised that Nsereko's assertion that Mathematics was the queen of the sciences was after all true for all sciences. Michael Nsereko who chose Mathematics, which he was very good at, went on to study Civil Engineering at the University of Nairobi and at the time of writing, was practicing as a consultant engineer in Kampala. The article correctly summed up the importance of Mathematics as a discipline of exciting academic pursuit in its own right and in its applied form, as the foundation for other scientific disciplines such as Physics, Chemistry, Astronomy, Engineering and Economics, to mention a few. It does not, therefore, come as surprise that the Department of Mathematics in the Faculty of Science at Makerere has and continues to play this double role of the subject as a serious intellectual discipline in its own right and as the Queen of the Sciences. Mathematics has been taught at Makerere for many years and has grown along with Makerere as an institution of higher learning.
Besides servicing other departments and faculties where students take courses that require good grounding in Mathematics, the Department of Mathematics has enjoyed a reputation for excellent teaching. Students who studied Mathematics as a single subject in the 3.1.1 honours combination (referred to as Mathematics Z) used to be looked at by their fellow students as of a rare breed. Many students believed that Mathematics was not a subject for the faint-hearted. Interestingly, Chemistry and Mathematics were the only disciplines in the Faculty of Science that used to be offered in the 3.1.1 or Z combination. A Mathematics Z student had to study Pure Mathematics, Applied Mathematics and one other subject which could be Physics or another subject such as Economics in the first year, followed by two years devoted entirely to Mathematics. Traditionally, the Mathematics Z class used to be very small, sometimes as small as three students or less. A student who wanted to specialise in Mathematics as a single subject could only be allowed to enrol for Mathematics Z in the second year of study after demonstrating in the first year university examination that he or she had the intellectual capacity to continue with the specialist higher level Mathematics. Also given the fact that the study of Mathematics as single honours degree demanded very high intellectual rigour and a lot of talent, it was not surprising that the Z classes were always quite small. In addition, few schools in the country, besides Kings College Budo, Uganda Technical College, Kyambogo and Nyakasura in Fort Portal, offered Pure and Applied Mathematics as separate principals, which at the time was a requirement for any student who wanted to enroll for Mathematics Z. This requirement could only be waived in very few cases of exceptionally bright students. It is also interesting to note that the Faculty of Science was in competition with the Faculty of Engineering at Nairobi, and later the Faculty of Technology at Makerere, for good Mathematics students. Many students who could have otherwise studied Mathematics Z opted for Engineering. This made the pool of talented students very small.

The majority of students who wished to study Mathematics at Makerere opted for the less specialised 3.2.2 combination or X combination where, in the second and third years, Mathematics was combined with another subject such as Economics, Statistics, Chemistry or Computer Science. Incidentally, Geology, like Botany and Zoology, was not one of the subjects that could be studied with Mathematics in the X combination. Geologists required a strong dose of Chemistry to be able to handle Geochemistry and Chemical Analysis, so it could only be studied with Chemistry in the second and third years. This was the practice until I left the university. However, during the time of acute staff shortage, the Mathematics Z combination had to be dropped, because the department lacked staff to teach it effectively. As we have seen before, the same thing happened to Chemistry Z. The Department of Mathematics had an interesting relationship with the Physics Department for students who wanted to study Physics as a single subject in their third year. The arrangement was that
the students had to continue with Mathematics in the second year in the unique 3.2.1 combination of Y combination. Most students opting for this combination usually studied Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics in the first year. In second year, they dropped Chemistry and continued with Mathematics and Physics. They only dropped Mathematics at the end of the second year and continued with Physics or Physics Z. The reason students who wanted to study Physics Z in their final year had to continue with Mathematics in the second year was that Physics, being a highly mathematical discipline, students had to have a high mathematical proficiency beyond the first year Mathematics X course. Why the faculty chose to use the very last letters of the alphabet as codes for these subject combinations was something I never quite figured out. However, the introduction of the semester system in 1996 changed the old tradition of coding degree subject combinations and minimised the rigid subject demarcations which had existed in the faculty for so long. The preferred terminology in the new semester system was major and minor subjects and what constituted major and minor was the number of credit units a student registers for in a particular subject.

No doubt, the Mathematics Department was one of the departments that was hardest hit by the staff shortages during the Idi Amin era. The few members of staff who remained after the exodus of 1972-73, found themselves taking on far more courses and teaching loads. Some had to teach areas of Mathematics where they had very little or no specialist knowledge. During his inaugural speech as the new Vice Chancellor on June 1, 2004, Professor Livingstone Luboobi, a long-serving member of staff of the department, lamented how he missed the opportunity to study for a PhD at the University of Toronto in Canada, where he had earlier taken his MSc. He said that, in spite of the assured funding, he had to come back to Makerere to help save the situation on the request of his Head of Department. He had to wait for several years before he could go out again, this time to the University of Adelaide in Australia, for his PhD. Dr Jekeri Okee, a Germany-trained mathematicians who specialised in Mathematical Logic, had joined the department shortly before Amin's coup and, like many of his contemporaries at that time, he was soon called upon to serve as Dean of the faculty after the substantive Dean, Professor John Ilukor, took ill. When the conditions in Uganda became extremely unbearable, he threw in the towel and left for the West Indies. This was another loss for the department. It looked like there was no stoppage to the staff hemorrhage.

Fortunately, as Uganda began to recover from the hard times, it was more than a pleasure to see brilliant mathematicians return to Makerere. Dr Patrick Mangheni was one of the young mathematicians who came back in the early 1980s. After a brilliant undergraduate career at Makerere that saw him graduate with a first class honours BSc degree in Mathematics in the mid-1970s, he proceeded to Oxford University in the UK where he earned a DPhil in Functional Analysis. His return
was a big welcome relief to the department. In the long years of turmoil, Pure Mathematics had become a fledgling discipline. It needed a person of Patrick Mangheni’s calibre to put it back on track. At the same time, the department had recruited several Teaching Assistants’ including two females. In fact, their presence helped to beef up the teaching staff. Eventually, many of them went out for their higher degrees. Others chose to do them at Makerere. When Professor Mugambi, who had been the Head of Department for several years became Dean of the faculty in the latter part of the 1980s, Dr Livingstone Luboobi took over the reins as the new Head of Department. Undoubtedly, Livingstone Luboobi is one of Makerere’s outstanding mathematicians. Some of the documents I was privy to access indicated that he held (and still holds) the record of the best first class ever in Mathematics at Makerere, which he received in the 1969/70 academic year. He is one of the last batches of students at Makerere to graduate under the University of East Africa. As we have seen, during his undergraduate days, only the brightest enrolled for Mathematics Z. They were selected on the basis of their excellent “A” levels in Pure and Applied Mathematics. Luboobi, who had more than qualified for engineering at Nairobi, chose to study Mathematics at Makerere. He loved the mind-boggling subject more than anything else. Makerere of that era had a reputation for excellent Mathematics teaching. Students like him were taught by icons like Professor Cornelius P. Welter (now deceased), who had come to Makerere from South Africa before the apartheid era which cut off South Africa from the rest of Africa.

Livingstone Luboobi was not only a brilliant and versatile mathematician; he was also a renowned workaholic. His work in Biomathematics earned him international recognition: there is now a bio-mathematical model named after him – the Luboobi Model. So, when he took over the headship of the department, he quickly introduced important reforms. For many years, the Department of Mathematics was running only undergraduate programmes. He soon changed that. He introduced a Master of Science degree programme in 1986. He also established a strong research group in Mathematical Modelling, with emphasis on modelling biological systems. In fact, this marked the beginning of the teaching of Biomathematics – which he also introduced in the undergraduate curriculum – at Makerere. Under the NUFU programme, the department under his leadership, linked up with the Mathematics Department of the University of Bergen in Norway; and before long, he had attracted a group of enthusiastic young mathematicians who wanted to study under him for their advanced degrees. Much of his group’s research effort was spent on modelling the spread of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. It remains his running research interest to date. Out of his work, he and his students published several important and high quality papers that earned him promotion to Associate Professor and full Professor of Mathematics in a relatively short time.
After the successful MSc launching, Professor Luboobi started enrolling and supervising PhD students in Mathematics, a novelty in the department at the time. Dr Margaret Nabasirye of the Faculty of Agriculture was one of his pioneer PhD students and the first woman to register for a PhD in Mathematics at Makerere. When she successfully completed it in 1997, she and Professor Luboobi made history. I also made it a point to highlight her achievement in my graduation speech at the ceremony at which the PhD was conferred on her by President Yoweri Museveni, then Chancellor of the University. When she started working on her PhD with Professor Luboobi, she was still a researcher at Kawanda. After graduating, she left the Kawanda Research Institute and joined the Faculty of Agriculture as a Senior Lecturer in Biometrics. She was later elected the second Deputy Dean of Agriculture in charge of research under Professor Elly Sabiiti. Unfortunately, one PhD student, Kirunda died shortly before he was about to submit his thesis for examination. J. Y. T. Mugisha (or JYT as his students and peers used to refer to him) was another one of Luboobi’s notable students. Mugisha had been a high school Mathematics teacher at Makerere College School and in other schools for many years, and had built himself a reputation as a good Mathematics teacher, constantly sought after by students studying for their A’ Level Certificate. After several years of teaching, he decided to come back to the university and read for a Masters degree under Professor Luboobi and later joined the staff of the Mathematics Department. A few years after the MSc, Professor Luboobi took him on again for the PhD, which he successfully completed. Several publications came out of their work and, before long, Dr Mugisha was fast climbing the academic ladder. At senior lecturer level, he left the department of Mathematics and joined the Institute of Computer Science as Deputy Director. While there, he was promoted again to the rank of Associate Professor.

I have made reference to Dr Mugisha and the other students who received their PhDs in Mathematics at Makerere under Professor Luboobi for a good reason. In doing so, I have attempted to illustrate that, given the right environment and people of the right calibre, enthusiasm, with a clear vision and commitment, it is possible to turn a bad situation round; to transform a department like the Mathematics Department at Makerere from near collapse into a vibrant one. That was precisely what Professor Luboobi and his colleagues did. In fact, during his time, the interest and excitement for the PhD Degree became so intense that members of staff like Soul H. Nsubuga and his wife Rebecca decided to use their meagre salaries to sponsor themselves for their PhDs at the University of Edinburgh in the UK. This was unheard of at Makerere. I was so moved by their bold and heroic action and, as Chairman of the Staff Development Committee of Senate, I authorised the Academic Registrar, Mr Ngobi, to use some staff development funds to supplement their own contribution. Both completed the PhD and came back to the department. Others in the same department who registered for the Makerere PhD, completed and graduated in my time, include
Managing and Transforming an African University

Dr Gadi E. Besigye-Bafaki and Dr John Mango. Some students ventured into new areas of Mathematics like Insurance Mathematics and Finance Mathematics.

Dr Vincent Sembatya was another one of the budding young mathematicians the department had groomed in recent years and when the University of Florida admitted him with partial funding from Makerere, he chose to take his PhD in Topology, one of branches of modern Algebra. At the time, few students were registering for the PhD in Pure Mathematics. The last algebraist in the department, Dr Allan Babugura had left Makerere in the 1980s to join the University of Zimbabwe. However, in the latter part of the 1990s, the department benefited from the Fulbright Fellowship Programme when Dr Vance, an algebraist from the USA, applied for and got the Fulbright fellowship to come to Makerere and teach in the Department of Mathematics. Ordinarily, the Fulbright fellowships were strictly for one year, but when good reasons were given why the department wanted the Fulbright Commission to extend his fellowship for another year, Dr Vance ended up being one of the exceptions to the rule. He spent two years at Makerere and before he left, he confessed to me that he had enjoyed his stay and teaching at Makerere beyond his expectations. He would have stayed longer if the rules governing the fellowship had allowed. After the departure of Dr Vance, the department had no senior member of staff in the Algebra group, and Dr Mangheni was also on his way out. During my last year at Makerere, he decided to move over to the Christian University at Mukono to oversee the opening and development of an ICT park there. Like many before him from the Department of Mathematics who went for their advanced degrees abroad and came back, Dr Sembatya too came back to Makerere immediately after completing his PhD in the USA. When Dr Fabian Nabugomu who had been the Head of Department left for Edinburgh for his sabbatical leave in 2003, we decided to appoint Dr Sembatya to act as Head of Department until Nabugomu returned. Dr Nabugomu had joined the Department of Mathematics from the Institute of Statistics and Applied Economics. Perhaps driven by the passion for Mathematical Statistics, he decided on his own accord to transfer to the Department of Mathematics. Also to see Professor Paul Mugambi who, due to staff shortages had spent most of his career at Makerere teaching more than his fair share of undergraduate courses, go back to research and supervision of postgraduate students was like adding some more spices to an already delicious meal. It was as if he was reminding us of the old adage, “it is better to try, however late, than not to try at all”. On a few occasions, I used to be amused to hear him utter exotic words like “non-linear dynamics” to describe his recent research interests.

As we have seen, Mathematics Z at Makerere was a preserve of a few exceptionally bright and gifted students, and its teaching required a highly experienced staff. However, as staff shortages became serious in the mid-1970s and the few high schools that used to offer the PMM (Physics, Mathematics
[Pure], Mathematics [Applied]) combination at “A” Level stopped offering it, the department was forced to drop the specialist Mathematics Z option and, for many years, Mathematics X remained the only option the department was able to offer. Apparently, Professor Luboobi, a product of the once cherished Z options was pained to see the demise of Mathematics Z degree programme. So, he began to think of ways of bringing it back, albeit in a slightly modified way. However, his enthusiasm to revive the Z course was coming at the backdrop of changed times. Few serious students were interested in studying Mathematics. More and more students who would otherwise have made excellent mathematicians were opting for other professional courses such as Commerce (Accounting), Pharmacy, Engineering and related disciplines. The declining demand for mathematicians in the labour market exacerbated the problem of finding good students further. Most of the mathematicians graduating from Makerere were ending up as school teachers, a profession of limited appeal to most students. So, even if he wanted to revive the combination in the old format, he would have had difficulty finding the kind of students who met the old stringent requirements.

The department cleverly went round the problem by waiving the rule that required all Mathematics Z students to have offered Pure and Applied at the principal level at the Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education and to have studied the two as separate subjects in their first year at the university. Livingstone Luboobi suggested to the Faculty Board of Science that Mathematics Z should be treated like Chemistry Z, which did not impose too much restriction on the subject combinations a student had to study in the first year as long as Chemistry A was one of them. In those days, subjects such as Mathematics, Chemistry and Physics had the A and B options. The B option was terminal, while option A continued beyond the first year. In other words, his proposal was that a potential Mathematics Z student would study Mathematics A in addition to two other subjects; the selection for the Z option would take place in the second year and would depend on the student's performance in the subject in the first year examinations. Secondly, the department was now well staffed and, therefore, in position to remount the specialist degree programme. It was a controversial proposal. Some thought it would not produce the kind of students who would meet the intellectual rigours Mathematics Z demanded. At the end of the day, Luboobi was able to convince the Faculty Board, Senate and ultimately the University Council that there was merit in the proposal. It worked and, before long, Mathematics Z was back just as Chemistry and Physics Z had earlier made a comeback.

After the programme resumed, we discovered that our initial fears were unfounded. It was possible to identify students with the right aptitude for the subject and many were excelling. Dr Venasious Baryamureba was one of them. After obtaining a first class honours degree in Mathematics at Makerere, he went to the University of Bergen for his MSc and eventually got his PhD in
Informatics. However, on return, he transferred from Mathematics to the Institute of Computer Science, where he became its Director and later the first Dean of the Faculty of Computing and Information Technology. I was happy and satisfied to see all these exciting developments take place in this old but important department during my stewardship. But the difficult rejuvenation process in the Mathematics Department reminded me of how easy it was to destroy and how difficult it was to rebuild. I can only hope and pray that at no account will the painstaking work of Professor Luboobi and his colleagues, that put a floundering department back on its feet, be in vain again. One only needs to remember that a few years earlier, the Department of Mathematics could not find good candidates to hire as Assistant Lecturers and the Appointments Board had to waive the requirement of a BSc degree of at least second class-upper division standing to ameliorate the bad staffing situation the department happened to find itself at the time. However, the insistence of the board that the department makes every effort to find the right candidates and that those without the normal minimum requirements be appointed on contract terms of not less than three years, yielded results. Those on contract could only earn tenure after they had obtained a Masters degree in Mathematics from a recognised university. As we shall see later, Professor Luboobi, under whose leadership most of these developments took place, went on to serve as Dean of the faculty for eight years before he moved on.

Besides the loss of a PhD student, Kirunda, the death of Mr Kizza was another blow to the Mathematics Department. Mr Kizza, a specialist in Numerical Analysis, had returned after spending many years in exile in Kenya. When Uganda became unsafe, he took refuge at the University of Nairobi, where he taught in the Department of Mathematics until he was sure that the situation was sufficiently safe for him and his family to come back. During my time as Head of the Department of Chemistry, I had asked him to help me with the teaching of our third-year Industrial Chemistry students in Numerical Analysis, a request he willingly accepted. But before Kizza came back to Uganda for good, the department had lost a PhD holder, Dr Sennyonyi, to the Church of Uganda. After completing his PhD in Mathematics in Australia in the 1980s, Dr Sennyonyi had returned to Makerere as a lecturer in the Department of Mathematics at Makerere. A devout Christian, he soon felt a strong calling to the church ministry so much that he decided to take up full-time preaching with late Bishop Festo Kivengere’s Evangelist Enterprise (EE). Apparently, he also had a calling to priesthood. After a few years as a lay preacher with the Evangelistic Enterprise, he decided to go to the Bishop Tucker Theological College in Kampala to train for priesthood. After his ordination, he joined the Namirembe Diocese, where he was one of the highly educated priests in the Church of Uganda. There, he joined Reverend David Sentongo who at the time was doubling as a priest in the Church of Uganda and Makerere’s University Secretary. In spite of my passionate pleas to persuade
him to return to his Mathematical roots by offering part-time teaching in his old
department whenever I happened to meet him, Reverend Dr Sennyonyi never
came back to Mathematics. He later joined the Christian University at Mukono
as Deputy Vice Chancellor, and I strongly suspect that he played some role in Dr
Patrick Mangheni’s decision to leave Makerere for Mukono.

In spite of the good progress the department had made in less than ten years,
a few black spots remained. There were a few red herrings that, for reasons best
known to them, refused to register for the PhD. Perhaps they were trying to test
the university’s resolve to implement the Mujaju Report, which required every
lecturer to have a PhD or its equivalent, or otherwise show why they should
remain on the university staff. These few members of staff are not ashamed of
the fact that they had not moved beyond the rank of lecturer since they were
appointed into the university service almost fifteen years earlier. Students they
taught years ago had beaten them to it and were making good progress up the
promotion ladder. I just hoped that those were the last of their kind. That setback
notwithstanding, by the time I retired the department was boasting of ten PhDs
out of a teaching staff of fifteen, which happened in a space of less than ten
years. The days of Mugambi, Luboobi and Mangheni as the only PhD holders
in the department were long over. Besides a few gray-haired grand masters, the
department had a good pool of young Mathematicians, which made it a ticking
department that it once was.

Shortly before I left the university, the department introduced a two-year
Master of Mathematics – MMath. It was unlike the MSc, which primarily
trained students who wanted to apply their advanced knowledge of Mathematics
in industry, scientific research and those who were simply interested in the
fundamental Mathematical ideas. The MMath was modelled more or less along
the same lines as the Master of Engineering in the Faculty of Technology. It
was designed specifically for people in the field, people working in industry or
as college or high school Mathematics teachers. It was largely a taught course.
Students attended lectures and sat for written examinations after which they wrote
just a short paper instead of a complete dissertation, which was a requirement for
the MSc degree. As I was about to leave the university in 2004, rumour became
rife that the department thought it had come of age and therefore wanted to
transform itself into a bigger unit with a wider mandate. It wanted to become
an independent Institute of Mathematics, in much same way as the Department
of Economics had been transformed into an Institute of Economics and later
a Faculty of Economics and Management. Since I was timed out, I never
participated in that debate. However, to borrow a leaf from Nelson Mandela’s
autobiography, we could safely say that the mathematicians at Makerere and their
department had walked the long and hard walk to recovery. They had also walked
the talk.
Unfortunately, and for reasons dictated by many years of tradition, unwritten rules, as well as stereotyping, the majority of female students in the Faculty of Science opted for the biological sciences. At least that was the tradition during my undergraduate days. The biological sciences were perceived as the least quantitative discipline and therefore appealed to female students, many of whom disliked anything to do with numbers. Rightly or wrongly, at the time I was an undergraduate most female students considered the highly quantitative science disciplines like Mathematics, Physics and Physical Chemistry as the domain of male students. Even after many years of attempts at changing this perception, still fewer female students attempted these disciplines than male students. Therefore, it was not surprising that Botany and Zoology at Makerere tended to attract females in fairly large numbers. It was also little wonder that the two departments boasted of the largest number of females on their staff in the entire Faculty of Science. Zoology was actually the first department in the faculty to have had a full female Professor, Dr Mary Nakandha Okwakol. However, this is not to say that fewer male students studied Botany or Zoology; on the contrary, even then, men formed the majority of the teaching staff in the two departments. Interestingly, recent advances in disciplines like Biotechnology, Molecular Biology and Genetics have kept attracting male students to the discipline of Biology. In fact, some people had predicted that advances in Biology were likely to dominate Science in the Twenty-first Century.

The Department of Zoology at Makerere had a good track record for research. In 1968, Dr William Banage, the first African Professor of Zoology at Makerere, took over its headship from the famous Professor Biddle, who had a respectable record as a researcher. Unfortunately, Professor Banage did not last long in the department. He left abruptly when Idi Amin appointed him Minister of Animal Industry in his first cabinet. Coincidentally, John Babiha whom Banage replaced as Minister, also hailed from the old district of Toro in Western Uganda. Besides being a Cabinet Minister in Obote’s first Government, John Babiha also doubled as Uganda’s Vice President. We recall that Amin’s first cabinet was made up of essentially technocrats and civil servants and Professor Banage was one of them. I am tempted to believe that Banage’s name came to Amin’s attention in the aftermath of the sudden appearance in 1970–71 of a rare colourful lizard called the embalasasa in various parts of Kampala. When the highly colourful reptile (that often sports purple, red, blue and yellow colours) first appeared, most people believed it was an extremely venomous lizard and its sight scared everyone to death. The patterns on its back gave it a really fearsome look. Professor Banage, as the leading zoologist in the country at the time was asked to provide the public with some facts about the strange looking lizard. Was it really as poisonous as it was assumed to be? After studying the specimens presented to him, Banage quickly allayed public’s fear by declaring the lizard totally harmless. He pointed out that its fierce-looking back was a form of protection against its predators. That ended the embalasasa frenzy in Kampala.
When Professor Banage and other senior members of staff left the department almost en masse, the responsibility of running it fell on a young Senior Lecturer by the name Gwahaba. Before then, it was unthinkable for an academic department at Makerere to be headed by a person who was not a full professor. In fact, Gwahaba made history. To complicate his situation even further, he was also still a PhD student. A brilliant young man, Gwahaba was extremely well organised and always wanted to do everything to perfection. Due to staff shortage, he was combining a heavy teaching load and his PhD research with administration that was equally demanding. The combination was to prove lethal. He came down with a serious stroke that left him almost speechless and paralysed. He never recovered from it. Whenever I met him, I could not help feeling deeply sorry for a productive life abruptly cut short by the chaos rogue leaders had decided to subject the country to. He had paid the price for Idi Amin’s actions, which had left most of the university departments without staff. However, the late Gwahaba was a man of extraordinary courage and unbelievable determination. He was not ready to be put off by the misfortune that had befallen him. It was as if he was telling us that, even though he may be down, he was not yet out. The intensive physiotherapy and speech therapy he underwent helped him recover some of his speech and the partial use of his limbs. Although he was now frail and confined to the wheel chair most of the time, he insisted on teaching a few undergraduate classes. But with the speech slurred, the students had a lot of difficulty understanding him. He also tried to continue with his research on the bird menace at the Entebbe Airport. Time came when he was so weak that he had to abandon the teaching and his research altogether. In 2002, he died after almost two decades as a vegetable researcher.

At the time of Gwahaba’s death, the Zoology Department had sufficiently recovered. Professor John Okedi, who had been Director of the Fisheries Research Institute based at Jinja had re-joined the department and had taken over as head. Years before when the department was under the stewardship of Professor Biddle, John Okedi was one of the few young Ugandan students who took their PhDs there. In July 1985, once again the Government of Uganda changed hands and Dr Michael Agrochai Owiny, who had been at the university, requested a transfer to the Department of Zoology as full professor. Dr Owiny was another accomplished zoologist. He was a holder of the University of London PhD and, as we saw earlier, he had taught at Kenyatta University in Nairobi, Kenya for many years before returning to Uganda to take up the post of University Secretary at Makerere. The former Minister of Education in the short-lived Government of Tito Okello Lutwa, Professor Timothy Wángusa, who had been picked from the Department of Literature at Makerere and appointed Minister of Education accepted Dr Agrochai’s request and promoted him to the rank of full Professor of Zoology. As we have seen before, under the old Makerere University Act of 1970, amended by decree in 1975, the Minister of Education had the prerogative...
to appoint professors for the university. Unfortunately, Professor Owiny died from natural causes soon after he had moved over to the department. At about the same time, Jonathan Baranga had completed his PhD under the supervision of Professor Freddick Kayanja, and so had Boniface Makanga and Eldad Tukahirwa. P. M. B. Kasoma, Mary Okwakol, Gilbert Isabirye Basuuta, Anne Kezimbira Miyingo and Deborah Baranga among others were also busy working on theirs. On a happy note, all completed their PhDs successfully. In fact, for a while, the Department of Zoology had the highest number of PhD holders on its staff in the Faculty of Science. I cannot forget how proud I felt when one day the young Ms Anne Akol came to my office to break the news that she had been admitted for the Master of Philosophy (MPhil) Degree at Cambridge University in the UK. Cambridge was also giving her a full scholarship. Akol went to Cambridge, successfully completed the MPhil and went on to do a PhD at the same university. Like a true patriotic Ugandan, after completing her two degrees at Cambridge she came back to Makerere to continue teaching and doing research. Anne Akol was a further proof that despite the difficulties, Makerere was still producing quality graduates.

Professor Okedi did not stay long at Makerere. The Ugandan Government and the World Bank were in the process of reorganising agricultural research countrywide. Professor Okedi left Makerere and joined a team of experts that set up the National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO), in the mid-1990s. He later joined the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) as its first Executive Director. I had collaborated with him on a research project that was evaluating the extent to which the Nakivubo Channel, Kampala’s main drainage channel, had been polluted. We were also studying the effect of pollution on River Nakivubo’s aquatic fauna. Our MSc student on the project, Yusuf Kizito, produced an excellent thesis. Our study showed for the first time that the marsh between the Kampala Sewage Works and the open waters of Lake Victoria’s Murchson Bay had the ability to filter pollutants which River Nakivubo would otherwise drained directly into the lake. The swamp was acting as a filter, protecting the lake from both organic and inorganic pollutants from Kampala and its environs. Without the filtering effect of the marsh in the swamp, the lake would be receiving a lot of phosphates and nitrates, which in turn would stimulate excessive algal growth. The excessive and rapid growth of algal blooms would lead to the death of that part of the lake through a process known as eutrophication. Our findings were confirmed by others who also carried out a similar study on the same channel. I felt sorry to see Professor Okedi, who had become a co-researcher and a close friend of mine, go. However, I was fortunate to have joined him again as Chairman of the NEMA Board of Directors in 1998. By then we were both out of active research; administration had started bogging us down. After completing the MSc and before Professor Okedi left, Kizito joined the staff of the department as Lecturer in Hydrobiology. After a few years, he secured a
scholarship to study for a PhD in Limnology and other aspects of Hydrobiology in Austria. Once again, he wrote an excellent thesis that earned him not only a PhD, but also a prestigious international award in Belgium. His work in Austria led to several publications in good international journals and, before long, he was promoted to the rank of Senior Lecturer and eventually Associate Professor. I was extremely delighted to see Dr Kizito progress so fast. We had worked together on the Nakivubo Channel project under extremely difficult conditions. We had no funding to speak of. On his own initiative, he had managed to secure some money from the Muslim Supreme Council, but it was hardly enough to support him. What I admired about him as a student was his determination and ability to endure. I was happy that I had found him and trained him well in research methodology, which put him in good stead when he went to Austria.

When John Okedi left, Boniface Makanga took over the departmental headship. Like Gwahaba before him, Makanga was also a PhD student working on the control of water snails that had the potential to spread bilharzias. He was collaborating with Dr Olwa Odyek of the Chemistry Department. Once, Makerere University had a policy that if you were a student, you could not head a department. However, during the hard times, the policy did not hold, and could not be enforced any more as members of staff were compelled to double as graduate students and Heads of Departments due to the crucial staff shortage. This had the inevitable effect of slowing down their progress as students, and so many of them were taking too long to complete their higher degrees. Graduate study was essentially research work, either on the field or in the laboratory, and that was where the problem was. Fortunately, as the staffing situation continued to improve, we were forced to revisit the policy. After very careful consideration, we came with a new policy that required a member of staff who had registered for a higher degree to request for study leave from the Vice Chancellor and be relieved of any teaching and administrative responsibilities. For the Masters degree, the leave was initially granted for two years and for the PhD, three; but with good reasons backed up by a supervisor's report and recommendation, the leave could be extended. However, the change in policy came too late for Makanga. Being an extremely resourceful person, he successfully managed to combine his PhD research with teaching and administration and, before long, he had completed his PhD thesis and was ready to graduate. He was fortunate to have survived the misfortune that befell his predecessor, Gwahaba.

Dr Makanga continued to shoulder the departmental administrative responsibility for two full terms of three years each. Meanwhile, Dr John Kaddu had returned from Nairobi, where he had been working as a Research Scientist at the International Centre for Insect Physiology and Ecology (ICIP). Soft spoken, Dr Kaddu quickly settled in and when Dr Makanga stepped down, his colleagues elected him the new Head of Department. He continued with his research and
publishing, which soon earned him the promotion to full Professor of Zoology. In the process, the department lost Dr Jonathan Baranga who left Makerere to join Mbarara University of Science and Technology, where he started a Faculty of Science. He later became a professor there and the first Dean of the newly created Faculty of Science at Mbarara. Given the relatively healthy staffing position the department was now enjoying, his departure did not cause too much disruption. After all, he had made his own contribution. He had seen the department hit rock bottom in the 1970s when he was recruited as a Graduate Assistant and had seen it recover from the ashes, from the mid-1980s. It was perhaps the right time for him to move on. The good thing he did for the department was to leave his wife, Dr Deborah Baranga behind, having obtained her PhD from Makerere in 1995.

In the late 1980s, the UNDP came up with a scheme that would help universities and other institutions to benefit from the wealth of knowledge and expertise of African professionals working abroad. The UNDP had come to the conclusion that the constant and excessive brain-drain of expertise from Africa to the more developed world was beginning to have a serious negative impact on the development of Africa. Although it was nearly impossible to repatriate all African professionals working outside the continent back to Africa, it was possible to use their expertise to solve some of the continent’s problems. The UNDP code-named the scheme TOKTEN, which literally translated, was Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals. Makerere University was one of the universities that benefited from the scheme. In Uganda, the scheme was administered by the Office of the UNDP Resident Representative. As Vice Chancellor, I was called upon to identify suitable candidates and submit a request to the Resident Representative. The UNDP would take it from there. Initially, the UNDP sponsored the TOKTEN fellows for six months but, under certain circumstances, the sponsorship could be extended to cover a full year. The experts coming under the scheme worked on short-term assignments like curriculum review and design or on a problem like implementing a new academic programme. After the assignment, they would write a report to the university and to the UNDP and went back to the country of their domicile. Afterwards, they would indicate to the UNDP whether they wanted to return to Makerere for good or not. Unfortunately, some of the Ugandans who came on the scheme were a disappointment. It seemed they were more interested in the money from UNDP than doing real work. In fact, some went back without accomplishing anything.

The cheats notwithstanding, we hosted several good Ugandans in the Diaspora under the TOKTEN scheme. Several of them had been members of staff before. Professor William Banage was one of the former members of staff who came back under this scheme. He had been away in Zambia, where he had been a professor at the University of Zambia. The TOKTEN assignment afforded him the opportunity to test the waters. At the end of his short assignment, he chose to stay. Since his
contract with the University of Zambia had expired, the UNDP decided to waive the rule that required him to return to Zambia before deciding to relocate to Uganda for good. Unfortunately, his wife had died a few years earlier. All he had to do was to go back to Zambia briefly, pick up his children and wind up. Finally, good old William Banage was back to his alma mater and to the old department he had to abandon against his will to save his life. Of course, while he was away, many changes had taken place at Makerere. Many of his contemporaries were no more. A few, such as John Ilukor and Paul Mugambi, were still there but almost in the twilight of their time at Makerere. Many more young people, some of them his former students, were now running the show. I guess his consolation was to find the department very much as he left it, less of course the Goodman Laboratory, the Animal Yard and the Cow Shed. The snakes too had long disappeared. Nevertheless, one thing or two were new. The course work and thesis for the Master of Science in Zoology was one. Secondly, the department was churning out more PhDs than during his time in the ’60s and ’70s. Thirdly, Dr B. Masaba, a former Minister like him had joined the teaching staff of the department as Associate Professor after serving as Minister in the NRM Government, moreover in the same portfolio of Animal Industry. There was also Owayegah Afunaduula, a graduate of the Universities of Dar es Salaam and Nairobi, who never shied away from controversy. As some would say, he was a man you loved to hate for his outspokenness. To tolerate some of his outbursts, one had to be constantly reminded of the fact that in a truly academic institution like Makerere University, all shades of opinion were tolerated and therefore, he was at liberty to speak his mind freely as he so wished, without feeling intimidated or gagged. Afunaduula was a complex character. He had an incredible passion for politics and Uganda Peoples’ Congress (UPC), was the only political party he staunchly believed in and recognised. The environment was his second passion. He was equally passionate about staff welfare and was once a firebrand member of MUASA. At one time, he had registered for a PhD at Makerere and seemed to be progressing well, but soon his registration ran into difficulties when he and his supervisor failed to agree. In a nutshell, that was the Zoology Department William Banage was returning to at the dawn of the new millennium; but being the man he was, he had no difficulty settling in again. However, he had to learn quickly to live with the good and the ugly he found at the department. It was indeed a pleasure to see him back at Makerere after many years in exile. When Idi Amin fell in 1979, he was not in a hurry to come back. With him back, the department was now boasting of three full professors on its staff list, another first. That was before Michael Agrochai Owiny died and John Okedi left Makerere to start NARO.

It was not usual for a non-zoologist to gain acceptance into the Department of Zoology. Dr Yusuf Kizito, who was there before him, was both a chemist and zoologist, but Dr Fred Bugenyi was an analytical chemist through and through. Hydrobiology had become of significant importance to the economy of Uganda. It encompassed the study of Fish Biology, among other things, and fish had
become a big money spinning business in Uganda. After the traditional exports like coffee, whose world market price kept fluctuating wildly, fish export was now a close second. It was one of Uganda’s high value exports. Fish Biology (or Ichthyology) had always been part of the undergraduate curriculum for as long as one could remember, but when commercial fishing became a booming industry, the department had to take a more serious approach to the study of all aspects of Fish Biology, both in the wild and on the farm. Fish farming was rapidly gaining popularity in the country, but with few well qualified professionals in Aquaculture and water quality.

Dr Bugenyi had been the Director of NARO’s Fisheries Research Institute at Jinja for many years and had published several papers to his credit. In the process, he had accumulated a wealth of experience in all aspects of fresh water fisheries research. He had completed his assignment with NARO and was now looking for a career change and new opportunities. Fortunately, he did not have to look very far. The opportunity for an appointment in the Department of Zoology was just knocking at his door. He was the kind of person the department was looking for to kick-start the new programme in Fisheries and Aquaculture; a programme which, as we have seen, the Faculty of Science shared with the Faculties of Veterinary Medicine and Agriculture respectively. Dr Bugenyi secured an appointment at the Zoology Department at the Senior Lecturer level. He, together with Dr Kizito and other members of the department, was instrumental in the design of the Bachelor of Science in Fisheries and Aquaculture degree programme, launched in the 2001/2002 academic year. Although the Chemistry Department had serviced the Zoology Department for many years and many students reading for a BSc in the two-subject combination or the X combination were offering Chemistry alongside Zoology, this was the first time a chemist had actually been appointed on the staff of the department. These were indeed changing times. The department was also closely collaborating with the University of Bergen on a “Man, Water and Society” research project. Professor Peter Larsen of the University of Bergen was one of the most active researchers from Norway on the project.

Through the Bergen-Makerere collaboration, the department acquired a motorised research boat which was moored at the National Water and Sewerage Corporation Waterworks at Kiruba, Gaba. The project also involved the use of a sonar, the first time I saw it being used on Lake Victoria, to locate and identify fishes in the deeper waters of the Murchson Bay and to assess their population densities. Although in recent years, fish catches from Murchson Bay had been on the decline, the sonar images which I had the privilege to see indicated that fish was still plentiful in the Bay. The reason why the catches were low could well have been due to the fact that the large fish stocks were residing at depths that the traditional gill nets could not reach. Dr Anne Kezimbira Muyingo was also quite an active researcher and the Makerere team leader on the project which I found quite exciting.
During my time at Makerere, Biology in the Faculty of Science was still being offered as two separate disciplines: as Zoology, which deals exclusively with animals and animal-rated organisms; and as Botany, which is a plant science discipline. The link between the two used to be the study of Genetics. However, in the 1990s, Biology was among the worst done science subjects at the Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education (UACE). High school students were failing at unacceptable levels. The high failure rate in Biology alarmed the then Minister of Education, Mr Amany Mushega, and it prompted him to find out what was going wrong. He wanted to know where the problem lay. He was convinced that his Biology teachers were much to blame for the dismal performance. If indeed the teachers were at fault, he wanted to know what was wrong with their training at Makerere. At the time, all graduate Biology teachers were trained at Makerere. It turned out that the problem had nothing to do with low teaching standards of the teachers but rather, at least in part, with the way Biology was taught at the university, as two separate disciplines. In the old BSc Education programme, students were required to offer only two subjects in their second year of study, the 3.2.2 combination and as a matter of course, the second subject that had to be studied in the second and third years was Education. Whereas a good high school Biology teacher needed a good balance between Botany and Zoology, the structure of the BSc Education programme had made this balance unattainable. Second-year BSc Education students had only two options: either to drop Zoology at the end of the first year and continue with Botany and Education, in which case their Zoology knowledge would not go beyond first-year university Zoology; or take a Zoology and Education combination and drop Botany, in which case the students’ Botany knowledge would stop at first year level. Short of that, such students would have had to continue with the three subjects in their second and third years. The short and the long of it was that for a student to have a good balance of the two biological disciplines, he or she had to take a 3.3.3 subject combination of Botany/Zoology/Education in the first, second and third years. That was not acceptable to the Faculty of Science for several reasons. Firstly, that kind of combination was difficult to accommodate on the timetable without creating too many unnecessary subject clashes. Secondly, it was at variance with the requirements of an honours degree in the Faculty of Science. Thirdly, the students too would be unnecessarily overloaded. As we discovered, this was the heart of the Biology crisis at high school. Most Biology teachers were either botanists with no specialist knowledge in Zoology or zoologists without sufficient knowledge in Botany. The Minister wanted an immediate solution and we had to come up with one quickly.

Traditionally, the School of Education had left the teaching of the content subjects to other faculties like Science, Arts, Social Sciences and Agriculture that had the capacity to teach them efficiently. Its main responsibility was handling trainee teachers in teaching methodology and other professional education subjects such
as Education Psychology, Sociology of Education, Educational Management and Philosophy of Education. However, in the early 1980s, the School had opened a Department of Science and Technical Education and for many years, Dr Jane Mulemwa, a PhD holder in Physical Chemistry from Queen’s University, Belfast, headed it. It was supposed to take care of the teaching of Science, Mathematics and technical subjects. Lack of sufficient staff, laboratories and workshops had made progress extremely slow. Some of the few original biologists and mathematicians she started the department with had left and joined the Islamic University at Mbale in Eastern Uganda, amidst a lot of misunderstanding, most of it stemming from the struggle for leadership and divided loyalty between Makerere and Mbale. However, the Minister’s concern was not something we were taking lightly. We very well knew that sooner than later, he would be asking for answers. After a series of discussions at Faculty Boards of Science and Education respectively and in Senate, we agreed on a way forward. The remedy was to find a way of teaching the BSc Education students Biology instead of Botany and Zoology. However, the Faculty of Science was not prepared to add Biology to its already congested timetable. The School of Education too wanted to teach subject content to its own students in a way that would avoid misunderstandings that used to crop up from time to time over issues like untimely release of marks and the alarmingly high failure rates of Education students, particularly in the Faculty of Science. The Senate decision and recommendation to the University Council was that Biology had to be taught in the Department of Science and Technical Education (DOSATE, as the department was popularly known). And so, we began to address the Minister’s concerns. By the time these changes were implemented, Dr Jane Mulemwa had left the department and taken up the position of Deputy Chairperson of the Education Service Commission. Incidentally, there were also many students who had studied Botany and Zoology for their BSc degree and wanted a teaching career. These students too were encouraged to study for the one-year postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) as it used to be called. At the time of writing, I had not been able to assess the impact, if any, these changes have had on the students’ performance in Biology at the Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education, nor had I seen any evaluation report. However, going purely by the hunch, the situation seemed to have improved somehow. As a senior administrator, I had to be prepared for the unexpected all the time. This problem was one of them.

The Department of Botany too has had a distinguished record. During its many years of existence, it had played an important role in sorting out the taxonomy of Uganda’s rich flora. In the process, many new plant species hitherto unknown to Science had been discovered and properly documented. Its rich herbarium collections stand testimony to this work. After confirming that the plants the Makerere botanists had discovered were indeed new species, the taxonomists at the Kew Gardens in London, which acts as the World Centre for
Plant Taxonomy, decided to name some of these new plants after their discoverers at Makerere, hence immortalising the names of people like late Anthony Katende. One of the new plants he discovered in Mabira Forest Reserve on the Kampala-Jinja highway was named Katendesis as part of its Latin botanical name. Taxonomists decided long time ago to use latinised names as scientific names for both animal and plant species. Therefore, instead of calling the plant Katende, the name was latinised to Katendesis. Interestingly, Anthony Katende, a product of Nyabyeya Forestry College in the present day Masindi District, started his career as a non-graduate forester in the defunct Government Forest Department. Later, the Department of Botany recruited him as a Technician. Despite his lack of a university degree, his knowledge of plant taxonomy was remarkable. He even co-authored a book entitled Useful Trees and Shrubs for Uganda: Identification, Propagation and Management for Agriculture and Pastoral Communities, with Ann Birnie and Bo Tengnas (both Swedes), which was published as a handbook in 1995 by the Regional Soil Conservation Unit, a programme of the Swedish Agency for International Development (Sida). It was sad to see Anthony Katende retire. He was a real asset to the department.

Fortunately, Anthony Katende had not been the only taxonomist in the department. Dr Remegius Bukenya Ziraba had also devoted much of his research effort on the taxonomy of the sulamun family of plants to which eggplant or aubergine (biringanya) and garden eggs (ntula) belong. It was a pleasure to see Dr Bukenya earn his designation as full Professor of Botany in 1994. A few years earlier, he had completed his PhD at Makerere under the guidance of late Dr Joseph Carasco. Professor Bukenya was one of the enduring members of staff in the Department of Botany. I remember him during the hard days of the early 1980s when we had to double as lecturers at Makerere and high school teachers in order to make ends meet. Since then, he and I had become good friends. Professor Bukenya's success story was another tale of how a person with a determined mind, organized and focused thoughts can achieve what many would consider impossible. Of course, Makerere has had several such success stories; his serves as yet another example of that breed of individuals. Apart from a stint at the University of Ghana at Legon where he obtained his MSc Degree, all his research work had been done at Makerere. It had culminated into high quality publications in reputable international journals and, when he submitted his papers in support of his application for promotion to associate and full Professor, they passed very well the scrutiny of the external vetters. It was interesting to note that Professor Bukenya did most of this research when he was the head of his department.

For as long as I could remember, the Department of Botany had had no new undergraduate programme ever since the BSc Botany, Z option and BSc Botany combined X option were introduced in the 1950s. That was the way it had been all
those years. Under the leadership of Professor Bukenya however, the department introduced a new three-year undergraduate degree programme in Ethnobotany. The new programme had, as part of its objectives, the advancement and dissemination of indigenous knowledge of plants as a way of conserving the country’s plant heritage. Secondly, the new programme was intended to train a cadre of professionals that could make a contribution to the scientific utilisation and conservation of the national plant resources. It also aimed at raising awareness of the role plants play in the economic, cultural, social and healthcare aspects of a nation like Uganda, without overlooking the role Ethnobotany plays in promoting the appreciation of the extreme richness and value of Uganda’s flora. At the time the new degree programme was being launched, I only had a vague idea of what Ethnobotany was all about and, quite frankly, I had mistaken the discipline to be closely related to Anthropology in the same way Ethnomusicology is a sub-branch of Anthropology. I almost told Professor Bukenya that some faculties, and Arts being one of them, had already expressed the desire to mount degree programmes in Anthropology, and so he should link up with them instead of duplicating efforts. He had to do a lot of educating before I could fully understand what the new programme was about and before he could present it authoritatively to Senate.

The University Council had noted with concern the absence of new and innovative programmes from the Faculty of Science which could also attract a clientele of fee-paying students. This was the Department of Botany’s response. In its first year of launch in the 2000/2001 academic year, it attracted very few private students. I suspect a lot of it had to do with the fact that the new programme had not been given sufficient publicity in the media. The following year saw a dramatic improvement. I was pleasantly surprised to see the kinds of things the Ethnobotany students could do when they mounted an exhibition during the UNESCO Science Day. The Ethnobotany exhibits were impressive. Besides the medicinal products, there were several other products that the students were extracting from plants, such as capsaicin, the chemical compound that makes pepper – particularly red pepper – hot to the tongue. The students showed that besides making food tasty as a spice, capsaicin had many other medicinal uses. The exhibition gave us a good insight into what this relatively new science discipline was all about. Besides Ethnobotany, which had some elements of multidisciplinarity that the university had started promoting, the department was also collaborating with the Department of Zoology and the Faculty of Forestry and Nature Conservation on another new undergraduate programme, the BSc in Conservation Biology.

In my years as Vice Chancellor, one of the things I really enjoyed most was to see colleagues completing their PhD programmes successfully and also getting promoted. The colleagues in the Department of Botany were no exception. I was particularly pleased to see my old friend, Dr Byarujali, obtain his PhD. At some
point, I thought that he had long lost what it took to do a PhD. He had taken a course in Limnology in Austria and that seemed to be about all. He was about to prove me wrong. Despite the fact that I left the university before I could see him climb the academic ladder, I was convinced that with the PhD out of his way, the rest would just fall in place for him. I had known him many years before for his keen research interest in the study of lower plants, especially the algae blooms. I had also moonlighted with him at Kampala High School for many years. It was equally gratifying for me to see Esezah Kakudidi, another colleague from the same department, receive her PhD in 2000. She too had taken her time to register for the degree. It was from her research that I learnt that palms in general are some of the slowest growing plants on earth. All these were senior members of staff in terms of rank and length of service. Inevitably, some were beginning to spot grey patches in their hair. That meant that, sooner than later, most of them would be retiring. Fortunately, the department had adequately taken care of that eventfully. It had recruited a crop of young brilliant botanists, initially as Teaching Assistants or Assistant Lecturers, but they were now maturing academically. The department had also built sufficient capacity to supervise PhD students. So many of these young upcoming botanists started registering for their PhDs under the supervision of their senior colleagues. Others went abroad. Among them were people like Patrick Muchunguzi, who had worked almost non-stop from the BSc to the MSc, and finally to the PhD. After cranking out a number of good publications in refereed journals, he quickly earned promotion to the rank of Senior Lecturer and when Professor Bukenya stepped down as Head of Department, he was asked to take charge. He also took over the responsibility for the implementation of the NORAD Botanic Garden Project, which we shall come back to later. The crop of young upcoming blood, who were on their advanced degrees also included C. Nyakoojo, J. Kalema, S. Nyakana, J. Tabuti, A. K. Tugume, Ms G. Nabulo, P. Tugume and M. Kamatenesi. The era when some members of staff believed that a Masters degree was enough to give you a comfortable stay at Makerere as a lecturer was sadly coming to an unceremonious end, at least in the Faculty of Science. The message was being driven home to those who had not yet woken up to that fact that, to command respect from your peers and students, particularly the graduate students, a doctorate degree was a must.

As I have said before, one of the most serious problems we had to contend with so often was the rampant death of staff and students, many dying in the prime of their lives and careers. Hardly a department escaped death’s ugly thieving arm. Besides a few members of staff who died in tragic road accidents or through premeditated murder or suicide, death of staff and students at Makerere was a rare occurrence in the past. It had now become commonplace. Death was everywhere, particularly in the early and mid-1990s. At the time, it was a terrifying and traumatising experience. The Department of Botany was not an exception.
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to the new scourge. In my ten years as Vice Chancellor, it lost two members of staff – Ms Ogwal and Associate Professor Hugh Buruga – in a space of less than five years. Hugh Buruga was a long timer in the department and had specialised in Genetics. He had worked alongside people like Ms Tallantire and Professor T. R. Milburn, who had served as Head of Department in the 1960s and a bit of the early ’70s, and had done much to improve the organ in the St Francis Chapel to which he devoted a great deal of his time. The two were his mentors. Besides being a plant geneticist, he was also an accomplished guitarist and musician. I guess if he had not chosen an academic career, he would have made a successful one in pop music. The consolation came when Professor Hannington Taligoola decided to return to Makerere after a stint at the University of Botswana, where he had taught for some years. Professor Taligoola was one of the few Ugandan academicians who did not desert Makerere during its darkest moments in the ’70s. In spite of the extreme difficulties, Dr Taligoola, then a much younger man, stayed and braved it all up until the late ’80s; but that was before he married and started a family towards the end of the ’80s, which as could be expected, marked a turning point in his life. It was the time for him to choose between serving Makerere on a peanut salary and helplessly watch his family starve or look for other ways of catering for his young family. He chose the latter, which was the most sensible thing to do at the time. However, his stay in the ’70s had been a blessing to his department. Not only did he help to keep it afloat, he saw a number of Special Assistants, left stranded by the departure of their expatriate supervisors, through their Masters degrees. Many had been appointed Special Assistants at about the same time I was appointed one, including my old friend, Mathias Male. After completing their MSc degrees, they were later appointed full Lecturers, which helped ease the acute staff shortage in the department at the time. I always knew Professor Taligoola as an expert in the field of Mycology, the science of fungi that includes all the edible mushrooms.

At the time of Idi Amin’s coup in 1971, the young Taligoola had just returned with a PhD from the University of Nottingham in the UK. He was one of the Makerere academicians whose careers were almost ruined by the turmoil that followed the coup d’état. Like Professor Banage, by the time he came back from Botswana, many things had changed – some for the better and others for the worse. I remember him writing to me to complain about lack of essential and basic equipment for teaching. At that time, I was equally helpless to do anything about his complaint, because I couldn’t find the resources for the equipment. The little I had on the Crown Agent account in London was almost exhausted. I was now banking on the African Development Bank deliveries.

Physiology, which deals with the study of how cells and organs of both animals and plants function, is an old but still an interesting subject; and Biology, as a discipline and in whatever form, cannot be complete without it. There is a common saying among life scientists that structures is to Anatomy as function...
is to Physiology. Both are an integral part of the discipline of Biology. In the Department of Botany, Dr Gerald Mutumba had been one of the people trying to push forward the frontiers of the subject. A BSc graduate of the University of Dar es Salaam and a holder of a PhD from the University of Wales, Dr Mutumba’s interest in recent years had focused on the relatively new method of plant breeding, using a physiological technique known as tissue culture. It was a technique which was rapidly gaining favour with the agricultural scientists who had to deal with a myriad of plant diseases almost daily. These diseases were largely responsible for the low crop yields in Africa. The technique allowed the scientists to produce disease-free cultivars. It takes advantage of a reproductive method, called vegetative reproduction that nature has perfected in plants over millions of years. There are plants which reproduce themselves, not through seeds but by allowing a part of them to grow into a new plant. Banana, sugarcane and cassava are typical examples of such plants. For maize, a farmer plants seeds; but for banana, it is the sucker. In tissue culture, scientists take another advantage that nature has also perfected. Under the right conditions, every cell in a living thing, particularly plants, is capable of growing into an entire organism. This makes cloning possible. Scientists have learnt to make use of this property of cells to grow entire plants from a few cells. The cells are cultured on suitable media in a sterilised environment. The results are plants which are copies of the originals but without the bacteria, fungal spores and virus found in the original plant from which the cells came. It is a form of biotechnology which is rapidly gaining wide use. Perhaps in the very near future, Makerere researchers will have moved in the more controversial animal cloning technology. For the time being, the Departments of Botany in Science and Crop Science in the Faculty of Agriculture and Kawanda Research Institute are at the forefront of this technology. Banana farmers have begun to reap the benefits of this new technology, and this is another area where Makerere University scientists and their counterparts at Kawanda Research Institute are providing the farming community with better varieties of crops capable of giving the small holder farmers higher yields from their small farms.

Despite the insufficient funds for research, Makerere was forging ahead with some serious basic and applied research of value to society. Tissue culture was one of the few technologies developed by the university in which the private sector had picked serious interest. Some businessmen formed a private company which was located along the Kampala-Mityana highway that produced disease-free banana suckers, using this technique for sale to farmers. Perhaps driven by his research interest in this technology, Dr Mutumba had indicated to me that he was seriously thinking about asking for a transfer to the Department of Crop Science because it had better facilities for this kind of work but I guess when he became Deputy Dean of Science, he changed his mind. It was natural for botanists to switch to Agriculture and a good many of NARO’s research scientists started out as botanists.
Throughout my long years at Makerere, only four out of the present seven departments that made up the Faculty of Science had so far produced a Dean for the Faculty. Among the four departments, Mathematics had the lions share and held the record. It produced Cornelius Welter, Jekeri Okee, Paul Mugambi and Livingstone Luboobi. Biochemistry came a close second, with Professor Tom Boyd and James Albert Lutalo Bosa. Physics had the late John Ilukor. Botany has had one so far, Professor Hannington Oryem-Origa. At the time of my departure, he was the incumbent Dean of the Faculty. The Departments of Chemistry, Geology and Zoology had yet to produce one. It was a pleasure to see my colleague Oryem-Origa take over the leadership of the faculty, after Professor Luboobi’s eight years as Dean. Both of us were relatively young men when, in the 1980s, we were suddenly propelled into positions of departmental heads. In spite of being soft spoken, he served diligently; he was an effective Head of Department and like his predecessor, Professor Livingstone Luboobi, Hannington Oryem-Origa managed to combine in a successful way, teaching, administration and his research work. While still Dean, the papers he published out of his research earned him promotion to the rank of full Professor of Botany, thus becoming the third Ugandan to be so elevated at Makerere.

I cannot end the story about the Department of Botany without making mention of one member of staff with an interesting background. A Catholic order called the Brothers of Christian Instruction with its headquarters in Canada had been running several Catholic Church-founded secondary schools in the country for several years. St Mary’s College Kisubi, located almost halfway between Kampala and Entebbe on the busy Kampala-Entebbe highway, is one of their most prestigious and much sought-after secondary schools in the country. For much of the Obote II administration, 1980-85, Brother Cosmas Kiwanuka Kafeero, a biologist had been the Headmaster of that prestigious school. At the time, Professor Isaac Newton Ojok, who had to serve a prison sentence for participating in Alice Lakwena’s failed rebellion, was Obote’s Minister of Education. St Mary’s College Kisubi, like most secondary schools founded by the missionaries was now under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education of Uganda. For some reason, a misunderstanding arose between the Minister and Brother Kafeero. Although I have not had the opportunity to interview Dr Kafeero on this matter, other sources had attributed the misunderstanding between him and Professor Ojok to the Minister’s insistence that Brother Kafeero admits under-qualified students to the school as a special favour to the Minister and Kafeero’s refusal to do so. Hence, Brother Kafeero had invited trouble for himself. This meant he had slapped the Minister in the face and for sure the Minister would not take such a snub from a headmaster. Brother Kafeero had to be reminded in no uncertain terms who the boss was. In fact, he was lucky not to have been labelled one of the rebels or a collaborator with the rebels that were fighting the Government at that time. Such accusations or allegations had dire consequences. Apparently,
Brother Kafeero had no choice but to relinquish the headship of the school. After stepping down as headmaster, he applied to join the Department of Botany as a lecturer. He already had an MSc from Plattsbourgh University in the USA. At that time, the MSc was the minimum academic qualification required for one to be appointed lecturer at Makerere. Fortunately, the department had an opening and immediately offered him the job. A few years later, I was pleasantly surprised when I learnt that he too had decided to register for a PhD. He had no difficulty completing it. It was conferred on him in 1996. Kisubi had lost him and Makerere had found him and put him, perhaps, to much better use.

After the coup of Idi Amin in 1971, it was Ugandans who normally emigrated, either for the security of their lives or for economic reasons. By commission or omission, Idi Amin had given Uganda such a bad name that few professionals of other nationalities came to Uganda in search of refuge or high profile professional jobs. Normally, the majority of people who came to Uganda in search of work were either semi-skilled or totally unskilled. Others came to join their relatives or countrymen who had settled in Uganda years ago. For a highly qualified national of another country coming to Uganda in search of a job at local salaries was one of those things that took you by surprise; but then, surprises are part of life. I recall Remigious Bukenya Ziraba, then Head of Botany, coming to me one day to seek my advice on an application for a Lecturer position from a Congolese national going by the name Mosango-Mbokuyo. This must have been in the mid- or late nineties. I think I even made a joke that I knew the Congolese for good music, Lingala and smart dressing but not for academic excellence. Mobutu's regime had destroyed whatever good academic institution the country had. All the same, I advised him to forward the application to the Appointments Board and let the Board decide. After scrutinizing his credentials, the Board decided to appoint him on condition that both his written and spoken English were to the required proficiency. Fortunately, he had a good command of English, because he had taken his degrees at Makerere, which I had not realised at the time. At the time of his appointment, he had only an MSc as his highest qualification and no PhD. To the surprise of us all, he turned out to be a serious and hardworking member of staff and before long, he had registered and completed the PhD at Makerere, which I thought was an amazing feat. From then on, he never looked back. For him, it was a steady march forward and by the time I retired from Makerere in June 2004, thanks to his prolific publication output, he had risen to the rank of Associate Professor, surpassing many Ugandans who had been in the department much longer than him.

When the Islamic University opened in 1988, there was an exodus of Makerere staff to Mbale. The new university offered far better terms of service than old Makerere. However, for some reason, many members of staff still decided not to quit Makerere altogether, but rather to provide part-time teaching at Mbale. In fact, I recall as Head of Department being contacted by the authorities there
to allow their Chemistry undergraduate students access to our laboratories for their practical work. I had no idea how to go about the request until I sought the advice of the Vice Chancellor, Professor George Kirya. Some of my own staff had also joined the trek to the land of Mount Elgon and used to commute to Mbale every weekend. However, instead of commuting to Mbale every weekend, Dr P. S. N. Ssekimpi of the Department of Botany chose to relocate to Mbale on a full-time basis; but before leaving, he promised us that as long as Makerere needed his services, he would continue to teach as a part-time lecturer. Makerere had no reason to refuse his offer, after all he had benefited from the university’s Staff Development Programmes. Like many of us, he had started out as a Special Assistant and as was the practice then, after completing his MSc he was appointed Lecturer. A few years later, he was off to the USA for his PhD at the University of Arizona and when he returned, he was one of the very few members of staff in the department with a PhD. So, Makerere was not about to dump him when he was willing to continue serving. Dr Ssekimpi was a man whose word you could take on face value. All the years I was Vice Chancellor, Dr Sekimpi didn’t miss his classes at Makerere. He served diligently despite the fact that there were times we could not pay him on time. But for reasons I could not understand, most Makerere people soon grew cold feet about Mbale. The exodus and commuting ended quietly, and only a handful decided to take up permanent positions there.

As I have pointed out earlier on, the Department of Botany had played a key role in documenting Uganda’s indigenous flora. I was once told that no self-respecting university Botany Department could do without a herbarium. Ours has had one for years but unfortunately, as the volume of specimens in the collection continued to grow, the small herbarium became hard squeezed for space. Help came from an unexpected quarter. The UNDP and Global Fund for the Environment GEF, decided to provide the Institute of Environment and Natural Resources with a herbarium, but after some discussions, it was decided that instead of duplicating efforts, the old herbarium in the Botany Department be transferred to the new building as a shared facility. The UNDP/GEF provided the funding and the University Council, through its Space Allocation Committee, approved the construction of a bungalow on a plot adjacent to the southern boundary of the Botanical Garden, next to what is popularly known as the Nkrumah Roundabout. Dr Panta Kasoma and his colleagues at MUIENR played an instrumental role in securing the funding for the new and modern herbarium, which also serves as a national reference facility. Dr Esezah Kakudidi was assigned the responsibility of managing the new facility on behalf of MUIENR and the Department of Botany. This was another milestone in the recovery of the University from years of decay and stagnation. Botany was back on its feet.

Biochemistry is one of those sciences that brings together two disciplines in an interesting combination. Just as physiology deals with the way cells and
body organs function, biochemistry deals largely with the complicated chemistry behind physiology. It deals with an array of important life-maintaining processes like protein synthesis, carbohydrate metabolism, the catalytic role of enzymes in cellular metabolism and many more. Therefore, students of Medicine, Veterinary Medicine, Agricultural Science and allied professions are expected to have a good mastery of Biochemistry. At Makerere, Biochemistry used to be taught as part of the medical and veterinary curriculum until the University decided to establish a full-fledged Department of Biochemistry in the Faculty of Science. To avoid duplication, the Biochemistry unit in the Medical School at Mulago was merged with the new Department of Biochemistry in the Faculty of Science. Although the department was not under the jurisdiction of the Faculty of Medicine any more, its home at Mulago was not closed down. Hence, Biochemistry became one of the few departments at Makerere that happened to have two homes at different locations; one on the main University campus and the other at Mulago. The Head of Department had to divide his or her administrative time between the two places.

I believe for reasons based on the projected demand for biochemists in Uganda’s labour market, right from the start, the department chose to offer Biochemistry in combination with another subject, (the 3.2.2 combination or X combination). Up to the time the University changed from the term system to the semester system in 1996, no attempt had been made to offer it as a single subject (3.1.1 or the Z combination). The other restriction was that Biochemistry was not offered as a first year BSc subject. Students wishing to study Biochemistry as part of their BSc had to wait until they had qualified to proceed to the second year of study and had a satisfactory pass in the first year Chemistry. Before the 1971/72 academic year, students could combine Biochemistry with subjects like Botany or Zoology. Later, the faculty changed the rule. Biochemistry could only be combined with Chemistry. The same thing applied to Physics X. There was a time students could combine Physics with Chemistry in the second year. Later the faculty changed that rule too and Physics could only be combined with Mathematics and nothing else. Besides the BSc degree programme in Biochemistry and Chemistry, the department was also servicing the Faculties of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine. For some reason, the Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry was not part of this arrangement; they handled their own Biochemistry teaching in the faculty. The first-year laboratory in the Department of Chemistry was the one of largest laboratories in the Faculty of Science that could accommodate a combined practical class of BSc, Medical and Veterinary students at the same time. That was the only time the first and second year Medical students had classes on the main campus of the University. Their practical classes used to take a whole day. Perhaps that was not surprising, since most biochemical reactions and processes are notoriously slow.
Professor Tom Boyd and Dr Winnie Stafford were key in setting up the department in the Faculty of Science. In spite of the fact that Professor Boyd’s background was in Medicine, he went on to become Dean of the Faculty shortly before Idi Amin ordered the expulsion of all expatriate staff from Makerere. In 1972, Dr James Lutalo Bosa, a graduate of the University of Nairobi, returned to Uganda after completing his PhD in Biochemistry at McGill University in Canada. In fact, he was one of the pioneer Ugandans to join the staff of the new department. Dr Edward Kakonge joined the department a few years later. Kakonge had his undergraduate training in the UK; a BSc from St Andrews University in Scotland, an MSc from the University of Sheffield and a PhD from the University of Newcastle upon Tyne. The year 1973 was a good one for the department. For the first time, three students, including a female, graduated with second class in the upper division. A fourth student who was always on top of the class missed it by a few marks. All were my classmates on the Chemistry side. The department decided to keep all the four as Special Assistants. In fact, the return of Dr Lutalo Bosa was a real boost to the department and for the graduate students, who were starting out on their MScs.

After the departure of the European expatriates, including Dr Winnie Stafford and Professor Tom Boyd, Dr Lutalo Bosa took over as Head of Department and did his best to get Jane Kaggwa, William Isharaza and John Patrick Kabayo through their MSc. However, one of them, Bernard Turyagyenda Kiremire decided to specialise in Chemistry instead, and so left Biochemistry. Indeed, all of them were good and determined students. After the MSc at Makerere, Jane Kaggwa went to Cambridge University in the UK for her PhD. John Kabayo did his at Bristol University, also in the UK. William Isharaza went to Belgium for his. The unending problems of Uganda forced all the three to remain outside. After graduating from Cambridge, Dr Kaggwa went to Zambia and taught at the University of Zambia for some years; Dr John Kabayo joined the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna while Dr William Isharaza joined the then East African Trypanosomiasis Research Institute. Later, as the situation seemed to have improved, Jane Kaggwa left Zambia and came back to Makerere, but her stay was a short one. Eventually, she left for one of the universities in Saudi Arabia. Isharaza joined the newly opened Mbarara University of Science and Technology to start Biochemistry as a service department in the new Faculty of Medicine. After Vienna, John Kabayo came back to Uganda and even contested for a seat in the Parliament of Uganda in a rural constituency in Mubende District. He won and briefly served as a Member of Parliament of Uganda. He seemed not to have had a serious calling for politics, because he did not sit in Parliament for long; he soon quit his Parliamentary seat and joined the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO). In-between, he taught in his old department for some time.
Another long serving “stayee” on the staff of the department and an MSc student of Dr Lutalo Bosa was A. Rutesasira, a modest and soft spoken man. He was appointed Lecturer in the late 70s soon after obtaining his MSc degree. By the time I called it quits in 2004, he was still there and had risen to the rank of Senior Lecturer. In his long career at Makerere, he had taught Biochemistry to scores of students, some of whom were now his colleagues on the staff of the department. I remember his keen interest in the tsetse fly research. Way back in the 1980s, he kept a constant colony of tsetse flies.

It appears the class of 1973 was exceptional, in a league of its own, at least until the 1990s. The class of 1975 was the closest match. It produced two outstanding students, James Ntambi and Florence Isabirye. Instead of taking the appointment as Special Assistant, Florence found a husband, Manuel Muranga (a linguist) and followed him to Germany where he studied for his PhD. James Ntambi took up the appointment, registered and completed his MSc under Dr James Lutalo Bosa. He then left for the USA to study for his PhD at the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland. When he completed it, the University of Wisconsin at Madison offered him an appointment and has never looked back. He quickly progressed through the ranks and soon became a full tenured Professor of Biochemistry at that University. However, for him, Makerere remained dear to his heart. He kept returning every year to teach a course or two or to engage in research or some other academic activity. In the intervening years, the department seemed to have run out of luck; it hardly recruited new Special Assistants with the kind of flair matching that of the 1973 class, primarily because in the intervening years, there were hardly students graduating with degrees of the right quality in Biochemistry and Chemistry that would qualify them for appointment as Special Assistants. The Medical School and the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine would have been sources of good candidates for the department but, unfortunately, most Medical and Veterinary students had no interest in Biomedical Sciences beyond studying them for their first degrees.

On a positive note, Dr Joseph Carasco (now deceased) one of the pioneer students to have studied Biochemistry for their BSc degree at Makerere had returned to the department with a PhD in Plant Biochemistry. After the BSc at Makerere, he proceeded to the UK and read a PhD at Durham University. As an undergraduate at Makerere, Joseph Carasco studied Biochemistry and Botany. During his time, the rule requiring Biochemistry to be combined with only Chemistry was not yet in force. After his PhD, he had a spell in Brazil and eventually settled at the University of Dar es Salaam before returning to Uganda. Being a Ugandan of Asian origin, there was no way he could have returned to Uganda when Idi Amin was still in power. Amin had declared them persona non grata in Uganda. Joseph Carasco’s return was a most welcome relief for the department. He was not only academically active; he was keenly interested in a
broad spectrum of social issues, the welfare of the academic staff being one of them. As we have seen before, he replaced Fred Juuko as Chairman of MUASA and organised the second staff strike in 1994 that almost dragged on for weeks, demanding that the Government makes good on the promise it had made to Makerere University staff in 1989, of paying them a living wage. We shall return to this strike in some detail later. Besides supervising several PhD students, including Florence Muranga, he also served as Head of Department for six years. He died on his return from Dakar, Senegal after attending a conference when the Kenya Airways Airbus plane on which he was travelling crashed in the sea soon after take-off from Abidjan Airport in Côte d’Ivoire. His body was one of those that were never recovered from the sea.

James Lutalo Bosa was one person I admired for his resourcefulness. Like Professor Luboobi, he was a workaholic and teetotaller. Indeed, Makerere was fortunate to have had him at a time the institution was going through one of the most difficult and trying episodes in its history. Shortage of staff forced the few that had remained behind to take on more than their fair share of responsibility, be it teaching or administrative chores. James Lutalo Bosa soon found himself doubling as Dean of the Faculty and Head of department. I remember many people who wanted to see him for one reason or other had to check with his two secretaries – the one in the Dean’s Office and the other in the Department of Biochemistry – to find out when and where they could see him.

In addition to this heavy administrative responsibility, he still carried his full teaching load and combined it with his research. However, it was not long before the University recognised his enormous potential and indeed his contribution and research output – measured in terms of publications – and promoted him through the ranks up to full Professor of Biochemistry. As a Head of Department in the 1980s, I had revived the tradition of what used to be known as the Departmental Colloquia. I invited speakers from outside the department to deliver papers on various aspects of Chemistry, including its application in industry and other disciplines. The seminars were open to both students and staff. I remember one delivered by my class and room-mate, the late David Katongole, who was then Manager of the Dye Department at the Nyanza Textiles (or Nytil as it was popularly known), at Jinja on the industrial application of Quantum Mechanics. Most students were amazed to learn that even a subject as theoretical and abstract as Quantum Mechanics, had industrial applications. One day, I decided to test the waters; I asked Professor Lutalo Bosa, busy as he was, whether he would be in a position to deliver a paper to the Chemistry Department on his recent research. Given his tight schedule, I expected him to turn my invitation down. He surprised me when he agreed and, true to his word, he delivered an hour long paper on his work on lipoproteins. It was little wonder, therefore that in 1989 Professor George Kirya asked him to act as Deputy Vice Chancellor when Professor Fred
Kayanja, who had been the substantive Deputy Vice Chancellor was appointed Vice Chancellor of the new Mbarara University of Science and Technology. We badly missed our busy bee Dean. At one time, I thought he would either break down or get a stroke, because of overwork. Fortunately, he survived them. He used to tell me that pig and poultry keeping was his way of moonlighting. That was how he was able to fulfil all his responsibilities at Makerere and make ends meet at the same time. It looked like, after years of rearing the people’s favourite animal, it became a practice he would find difficult to give up, even when the old difficult days gave way to much better times. In the farming circles, he was a renowned pig farmer and breeder. Besides being an accomplished academic, he was an effective administrator and some of us learnt a few tricks of the trade from him.

In the military jargon, there is such a thing as a battle-hardened soldier. In the Makerere of Idi Amin in the ’70s and Milton Obote’s in the 1980s, an administrator had to be problem-hardened. No doubt, Professor Lutalo Bosa was one of Makerere’s problem-hardened senior administrators. Even the car he used to drive, a dark green Datsun, bore the hallmark of the times – old and rugged. It had to be, because it was constantly on the road between Katalemwa and Makerere, taking his wife to work, his children to school and himself to Makerere and Mulago; carrying sacks of animal feed or trays of eggs and jerry cans of water. It was his little workhorse. Its absence from the Science parking lot was glaringly visible when he finally sold it. Save for Lutalo Bosa’s old Datsun, Kakonge’s yellow Mazda, Mugambi’s VW Variant, Ilukor Sekaalo’s Citroën and one or two of Jude Nyangababo’s cars that used to put in an occasional showing, as well as a few departmental vehicles that used to park there, the Science parking lot was a permanently empty place, where dogs would play. But by the time I left in 2004, people were fighting for parking space there! We had come a long way.

During the hard times, Dr Kakonge made good use of his Mazda to make ends meet. When he was not in classroom teaching, he was on the road ferrying paying passengers from Mulago to Kampala and back. Whenever you saw the yellow car in the parking lot, Kakonge was in the lecture room teaching; and when it was absent, you were sure he was on the road somewhere looking for passengers. Perhaps in today’s university vocabulary, he would be best described as a part-time lecturer cum part-time cab driver. That was how humiliating Uganda had become! After serving briefly as a Minister in Museveni’s first Government in the late 1980s, he returned to Makerere to continue doing what he knew best – teaching and research. He rose through the ranks, becoming full Professor of Biochemistry. Before Professor Lutalo Bosa moved further into the University Administration, he had recruited a young man, Gabriel Bimenya, whom he put through the MSc and eventually through the PhD as well. Dr Bimenya’s interest was in Medical Biochemistry. After rising to the rank of Senior
Lecturer, he decided to switch to Chemical Pathology and joined the Department of Pathology in the Medical School at Mulago. By the time I left Makerere, he was the Head of Pathology.

The 1990s were the years the fortunes of the Department of Biochemistry began to turn for the better. A new crop of good students were enrolling for Chemistry and Biochemistry, and graduating with good grades. The department had managed to attract some of them and the Appointments Board had appointed them as either Assistant Lecturers or Teaching Assistants. Soon most of them had embarked on their MSc degrees. After the tragic death of Joseph Carasco, the responsibility to run the department fell on the shoulders of the little known Ms Rhona Baingana. She had her undergraduate training at the University of Southampton in the UK and later moved to the University of London for her MSc degree. She was young and had no previous exposure to administration. It must have been rough for her but she managed to keep the department together. While we were contemplating whether, in spite of the new age restriction, to ask Professor Kakonge to take over the headship of the department for the second time, we received an application for a Lecturer position in the Department of Biochemistry from Dr Fred Kironde, who had completed his PhD at the State University of New York in the USA. Dr Kironde was one of those Ugandans who began their academic careers in a humble way but, with incredible determination, had progressed all the way to do the PhD. The Appointments Board did not hesitate to appoint him. Fortunately for him, during the years he was away, he had been busy publishing. With more than enough papers to qualify him for the rank, he soon was promoted as Senior Lecturer and elected substantive Head of Department. Ms Baingana must have given a sigh of relief that the heavy burden of running the department before she had completed her PhD was taken away from her. She was now free to pursue her PhD, supported by the Staff Development Fund.

As we shall see later, South African universities were the preferred destination for PhD students sponsored by the University. Compared to universities in Europe and North America, South African universities charged reasonable fees and many of them were just as good. Secondly, while on their PhD programmes, the students who were full-fledged members of staff, and were not completely cut off from their families and Africa in general. Some of the Assistant Lecturers in Biochemistry heeded the Academic Registrar’s call. Dr J.F. Hawumba was one of the early respondents to the call. The University of Pretoria, one of the most endowed universities in South Africa accepted him for the PhD, which involved research on high temperature performing enzymes. Such enzymes had a lot of potential for industrial applications. After successfully completing his PhD in the stipulated three years, he returned to the department. I was happy and relieved to see him back. At some point, I was not sure he would come back, thinking that a South African company interested in his research work would lure him
into staying behind. He set a good precedent for the rest. While some members of staff were leaving the department for their PhDs, the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt had entered into a technical cooperation agreement with the Government of Uganda. Under the agreement, the Government of Egypt committed itself to sending and paying for Egyptian experts to assist Uganda in the various scientific and technical fields. Makerere University was one of the institutions which had been identified as beneficiaries of the Egyptian assistance. As soon as the agreement became operational, I started receiving applications from Egyptian academics looking for appointment at Makerere. Many of them were well qualified and appointable. Others were not and that caused problems for me. Biochemistry was one of the departments to have benefited most from the Egyptian experts. By June 2004, four Egyptians were teaching there. Dr Yussif was serving as a Visiting Professor; Drs A. H. Mustafa, El Safty and F Attia had been appointed as Visiting Senior Lecturers. Although they did not come on long-term appointments, their presence was playing a vital role in augmenting the department’s staff strength. Interestingly, all this was happening after the department had moved into the new and modern home in the JICA building. Right from its inception as a department in the Faculty of Science, it had been squeezed and crammed between the Mathematics and Botany Departments in the Math-Science block.

By 1970, the year I entered the university as an undergraduate, Geology was a very young department in the Faculty of Science. Its founders were mostly British who had to leave in a hurry when Idi Amin turned against Asians and the British. There were hardly any highly qualified Ugandan geologists at the time who were ready to take over the running of the department. In 1973, a classmate of mine, Patrick Mazimpaka had graduated with a good BSc in Geology and Chemistry and the university had retained him for staff development. While Professor MacDonald was still Head, the department had introduced a Postgraduate Diploma in Pure and Applied Geology. Mazimpaka and Mboijana, who had graduated a year earlier, were the first students on the new Diploma programme. Because the staffing situation was so desperate, on graduation both Mazimpaka and Mboijana were appointed as full Lecturers without having a Masters degree. I believe Mboijana did not stay long, he went back to the Department of Geological Surveys and Mining at Entebbe. By 1979, the year I returned to Makerere, Patrick Mazimpaka was the substantive Head of Department. He had bought a brand new Datsun 120 car, which the Government had imported in early 1980 for allocation to senior civil servants and Makerere staff. It coincided with the rampant thuggery in the country and car theft had become common place in Kampala. One day, we met near Nkrumah Hall and I cracked a joke that he should give me a ride in his new car before the thugs stole it from him. Sadly, it turned out to be a prophecy. A few weeks later, the car was taken away from him at gun point along Namirembe Road at a place popularly known as Bakuli.
was a highly potholed stretch of the road, where every motorist had to slow down in order to manoeuvre through the myriad of potholes. He too had been forced to slow down when out of the blue a gang of armed thugs approached, stopped him and ordered him and his passengers to get out and hand over the ignition key. The car was never seen again. Understandably, he never quite recovered from the shock. I am sure the anger and the bitterness he felt at the loss of his new car with a debt to pay must have played a role in his unexpected resignation from the university. A few years later, I guess when he could not take it anymore, he left Makerere for an unknown destination, which left us speculating about his whereabouts. Some thought he was somewhere in Nairobi, but no one seemed sure where he was. In his absence, Stephen Sinabantu, still a Junior Lecturer in the department had taken over as Head of the Department. Much later, we learnt that Patrick had joined the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF), which at the time was waging war on President Habyarimana’s Government and, after the war, he had been appointed Minister in the Office of President Pascal Bizimungu in Kigali. In fact, I had the occasion of meeting him in his office in Kigali in 1998 when I led a delegation of Deans to the National University of Rwanda at Butare.

After the departure of Professor El Etri, who had joined the university in the early 1980s as a Geology expert under the UNDP/UNESCO Project and the death of Stephen Sinabantu, the department was once again struggling for staff. Fortunately, help was on the way and would come from the least expected source. The CIM, a German international organisation which supported German experts to work in developing countries on a long-term basis, assisted the department to recruit a German geologist, Dr Thomas Shulter. Being the most senior in the department at the time, he was requested to take charge of the department and he immediately began to reorganise it. Under the UNDP/UNESCO Project, the department had received an assortment of essential equipment and was one of the best equipped departments in the Faculty of Science. Dr Shulter was a very resourceful Head of Department. He not only rebuilt the department, he also set up a strong research team that saw several postgraduate students, some already members of staff, register for advanced degrees at Makerere. No doubt, his six years at Makerere were very productive years for the department and for himself too, through the many publications from the research projects he had initiated. He rescued the department from near-closure. Along the way, he also recruited several young Geologists and those who were able to complete the MSc degree were appointed as full Lecturers. Erasmus Balifaijo, Michael Biryabarema, J.V. Teberindwa, F. Kabanda, A. Katerema, among others were some of the prominent young geologists who joined the academic staff of the department about this time. By the time Thomas Shulter left, the department was in a much stronger position than he had found it. Shortly before he left and through the auspices of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), Dr Shulter had been joined by another German geologist, Dr Shumann, who came in at Senior Lecturer level.
When Thomas Shulter left, my former student, Andrew Muwanga, took over as Head of Department. Andrew Muwanga was one of the first students I taught when I had just returned from Belfast in July 1979. He had performed well in both Chemistry and Geology in the final year examinations, which qualified him for appointment as a Graduate Fellow, a title which had replaced that of Special Assistant. After a few years, he secured a scholarship and proceeded to the UK for an MSc in Geology at the University of Leeds in the UK. After his MSc, he returned to his old department, combining teaching with administration, as Head of Department. A couple of years later, he won another scholarship to study for a PhD at the old Technical University of Braunschweig in Germany. When Andrew Muwanga left for Germany, the responsibility of running the department fell on the shoulders of another young geologist, Michael Biryabarema, who had already made arrangements to register for his PhD at Makerere. Michael Biryabarema was a hard working student. Before long, he had completed his PhD, graduating in 1999. Later, it was Erasmus Balifaijo’s turn to have a go at the headship. Balifaijo had come to Makerere with a BSc and MSc from Carolina in USA. Earlier during his PhD thesis research, he had worked with some professors from Kanazawa University in Japan through a link the department had forged with that University. He completed his PhD in 2000. It was a re-assuring experience to see the number of PhDs steadily growing in a department that had suffered so many setbacks in the seventies and eighties; and to see so many young men and women, some having graduated a few years earlier, go out to far places like Norway, Germany, Belgium, France and South Africa, to mention a few, for their advanced degrees and other professional qualifications in Geology and come back to the department to take up appointments as Lecturers or Assistant Lecturers. The department also celebrated another important milestone when, for the first time at Makerere, a woman, Ms B. Nagudi received a PhD in Geology. By 2004, the full time academic staff strength in the department had risen to twelve, with one part-time Lecturer, Dr I. Ssemmanda and one Visiting Lecturer from Egypt, Dr H.M. El-Asmur. The staff stabilisation was, in a way, proof for one of the smallest departments in the Faculty of Science, that resilience had triumphed over tragedy.

In spite of the impressive recovery, Geology was still not attracting many students. I later learnt that Geology did not appeal to students because it was perceived to be a dull and boring discipline. Perhaps because of the way it had been taught for many years, students, could not immediately see the connection between Geology and Civil Engineering, Hydrology, Seismology, mineral prospecting and of course Petroleum exploration. Most students saw Geology just as the study of rocks. The department was in dire need of some innovative ideas to stimulate interest in the subject. However, when people are in the midst of chaos and unending crises, and everything around them seems to be falling apart, their intellectual output suffers too. No one is able to think straight or focus properly
on the future when the present is riddled with so many uncertainties. In such a situation, no one has the motivation to innovate. That, unfortunately, was the situation the department had been in for many years and the consequence was that the BSc Geology and Chemistry degree the department had been offering year-in year-out had not undergone any serious revision and was becoming a little stale.

As the dark clouds of the ‘70s and ‘80s began to lift, the department began to innovate, and more exciting academic programmes started. Besides the traditional Chemistry and Geology BSc programme, which had been running since the inception of the department in the Faculty of Science in the late 1960s and the Postgraduate Diploma in Pure and Applied Geology, the department had introduced a new three-year undergraduate BSc degree course in Geological Resources Management and a Master of Science degree in Geology respectively. The two programmes were launched in the early 2000s. The main objective of the new undergraduate course was to produce geoscientists that were well equipped with skills to best exploit and manage mineral resources, civil engineering works, environmental and natural disasters; and in addition, to train professional geologists who were also well grounded in management techniques. The renewed interest in the mining industry in the country, the petroleum exploration in Western Uganda and the country’s quest to provide clean and safe water to all its citizens, were some of the stimulants that led to the design of this degree programme. Given the history of the department, this was by no means a small achievement. The new programme emphasized the enormous economic benefits Uganda as a country stood to gain out of a well-managed mineral sector; in short, the department was telling the policy-makers in the country that there was wealth in Geology. As we saw earlier, the MSc degree the Department of Geology used to offer in the past was based on purely supervised research and a thesis. The new MSc in Geology was based on a series of taught advanced courses, which a student had to pass in order to qualify for the degree, followed by a short dissertation. The dissertation was now only a partial fulfilment for the award of the degree, and not the sole requirement. It was, therefore a gratifying experience for me to see the department put new muscle on its old bones in my time.

Additionally, the relocation of the Geology Department to the new and modern premises in the JICA Building in 1992/93 coupled with the enhanced staff research interests and increasing postgraduate student enrolment, were reflective of this mood of optimism. For instance, some members of staff were studying groundwater contamination and the role of geologic strata in retaining pollutants around solid waste disposal dump sites in Kampala. Others were looking at the environmental impact of copper mining on the streams and rivers that flow through the Kilembe Valley in Western Uganda; the impact of human activity on the vegetation North and West of Lake Victoria and the Geochemistry of the
Singo granite and its associated gold, wolfram and casseterite mineralisation in some parts of Uganda. Incidentally, the latter two ores are the major sources of tin worldwide. This was an impressive stuff with a lot of relevance to the environment, as well as socio-economic and sustainable development of Uganda. But just as we thought the department had fully recovered from the hard times, and research and publication had become buzz words, it was to suffer an unexpected setback when Dr Michael Biryabarema – one of the most soft-spoken persons I have ever met and a key figure in the department’s research effort – resigned in 2003 to take up an appointment in Rwanda.

Michael Biryabarema was a promising young man in the department and, through the prolific publications which came out of his research work, he had quickly risen through the ranks, becoming an Associate Professor even before completing his PhD, which was indeed a rare feat at Makerere. I had reason to suspect he was the first Ugandan to rise to this rank in the department. His sudden resignation coming as it did on the heels of my departure from Makerere, I could not help feeling sad to see him go. I thought that, through him, we had truly built the future of Geology at Makerere. He was now the most senior member of staff in the department and although we could only speculate, my gut feeling was that if he had stayed longer, he could have become the first Ugandan Professor of Geology at Makerere. I tried hard to persuade him to stay, but it did not work. He had made up his mind to leave, and there was nothing further I could do to stop him. To paraphrase one of William Shakespeare’s famous lines, it was as if he was saying that as far as he was concerned, “the world was a stage; you played your part and left”. I guess Dr Biryabarema had done just that all the years he had served his department and the University. For him, it was time to move on. Fortunately, Dr Andrew Muwanga had completed his PhD and had returned. This, to some extent, cushioned the impact of Michael Biryabarema’s sudden departure.

In 1988, almost a year after I had been appointed Head of Chemistry, I went on to produce a small pamphlet. It was an attempt at providing prospective students with a little bit of information about the Department of Chemistry at Makerere and why they should seriously think of studying Chemistry. I tried to detail some of the important programmes and research activities in the department. In conclusion, I posed a question: What on earth was not Chemistry? I did not answer the question for the reader, but left it begging for an answer. In recent times, I have heard so many nasty things being said about Chemistry and chemists, and good things too, depending on which side of the environmental lobby you happen to support. One of the things I pointed out to the reader of that pamphlet, and which I believed was true then and now, was the fact that – directly or indirectly – chemists have made our modern world what it is today. Therefore, the talk about Chemistry being the laxior of life was, after all, an
exaggeration or a far-fetched idea. Imagine what a modern physician would do without a chemist disguised as a pharmacist, that chemist who synthesises the wonder drugs behind the near miraculous cure of diseases once thought to be incurable and for which modern Medicine is now renowned! There was a time when Tuberculosis (TB) was a death sentence, because there was no known cure for it. Physicians could only look on helplessly as they watched their patients succumb to the disease or survive by sheer brutal force of the body’s immune system. In the absence of a cure, rest was one of the recommended remedies. Through long and hard work, chemists discovered a cure – an antibiotic known as Streptomycin, the first in a string of successful anti-TB drugs. At that time, Science had not yet discovered Genetic Engineering and Gene Therapy. Now, Chemistry and Biology are intertwined in the new and emerging Sciences of Biotechnology and Molecular Biology, which are poised to give humankind more scientific miracles.

Secondly, I have also heard, over the years, people ask the question: Why do chemists, and for that matter scientists, make good managers and administrators when they have no basic or formal training in management? – a question to which I could only hazard a guess. Much as management is an art, it is also serious science, much in the same way Engineering is an art and crucial science. Skills such as critical and analytical thinking, ability to organise thoughts and actions, decision-making, systematic approach to problem solving, ingenuity, creativity and innovativeness, good report writing and record keeping, team building, as well as intuition and perseverance are hallmarks of scientists’ way of life. These are also some of the things that preoccupy managers, most of their working life. Ever since the American space programmes began in the 1960s, I have been one of its avid followers. I have read virtually every piece of literature written about space exploration which I could lay my hands on. By all accounts, it has been an extremely successful programme. The thing that fascinated me most about the space programme was the managerial, organisational, coordination and problem-solving skills of the vast number of people involved in all aspects of the programme. The people who made it possible for twelve men to land on the moon and come back safely, even in the face of disasters as one which befell the Apollo 13 mission when the spacecraft was about a quarter of a million miles away from earth. NASA Engineers had to solve all sorts of unimaginable problems to bring Jim Lavall and his fellow astronauts back to earth safely. What makes this epoch-making story even more interesting was the fact that most of the people in key decision-making positions were engineers, mathematicians and scientists with hardly any formal management training. Managing such a vast, complex and dangerous programme required skills far beyond what most business schools could have taught them. As Gene Kranz, one of the Flight Directors on the Mercury, Gemini and Apollo missions, puts it in his book, “Failure is not an option”, they had no textbooks to make reference to for most of the things
they did and for the critical decisions they had to make. They were working in unchartered waters where none of them had ever been. As such, they had to write their own textbooks as they went along. It was like writing the rules of a new game when you are on the field playing. What they had was their brains, solid science and engineering. It was all they relied on to get the job done. In real management terms, most of them were amateurs.

One can argue that the space programme was in the main an engineering enterprise. However, like all enterprises, it had all the ingredients of a manager's job, namely people and resources. In fact, I used to be bemused by people, who had had long training in management and yet failed to manage organisations entrusted to them. In most cases, the best they could do was shift blame for their failure to scapegoats. This prompted me to coin the phrase, “If you cannot manage your own affairs, you have no business teaching others how to manage theirs”. I know that some readers will not agree with me on this one, but the empirical observations I have made over the years have led me to one simple conclusion: that when you are practising good science, you are indirectly teaching yourself and acquiring good management skills. I guess this and the American space programme example provide a partial answer to the question. To illustrate the point, in 1995, I attended the Association of Commonwealth Universities congress in Malta. While there I was intrigued by the large number of Vice Chancellors from all over the Commonwealth who were chemists. Other science and engineering disciplines were represented too, but in lower numbers than the chemists.

The Department of Chemistry, which I am a proud product of, is one of the oldest departments in the Faculty of Science at Makerere. If you happen to enjoy a well brewed and chilled beer from one of the breweries in Uganda like I do, chances are that behind every bottle of that clear golden solution, there is a Makerere-trained chemist; or if you have ever had a problem involving a court action that required a forensic test and you were referred to the Government Chemist at Wandegeya, you were in the hands of Makerere-trained chemists. Makerere-trained Chemists are everywhere making life tick the people and institutions they serve.

When I was appointed as Makerere’s eighth Vice Chancellor, I bet few of my colleagues in the department believed the news. As we have seen, since Makerere University College became Makerere University, the department had never produced a dean. The closest I ever got to being a Dean was during Professor Mugambi’s time when I used to stand in for him from time to time. It was one of those little wonders that do happen in life. By the time I returned from Kyambogo, my old classmate Dr Bernard Turyaganda Kiremire was running the department as Head. Like his elder brother and myself, he too had part of his undergraduate training in the same department, with the other part in Biochemistry. He was
one of the golden graduates the Department of Biochemistry produced in 1973 that I referred to earlier. A PhD graduate of the University of Windsor in Ontario Canada, he was a man of principle. He had returned to Makerere a few years after me, and had steadily risen through the academic ranks to Senior Lecturer and later to Associate Professor. Unable to continue with the kind of research in synthetic Chemistry, he turned his interest to Environmental Chemistry, with emphasis on pesticide residues. His new research area was attracting funding from donors and with it came equipment and a small vehicle, as well as a crop of MSc students and good publications. During his time as Head of Department, Professor Kiremire had overseen the last part of the rehabilitation of the department, which the European Union funded. He also took delivery of the new equipment supplied under the African Development Bank loan which the Government of Uganda had negotiated in the mid-1980s. Although he could have served another three-year term as Head, he chose to step down at the end of his first term. I believe he wanted to leave administration to devote more time to his research.

After Bernard Kiremire, members of staff decided to give the mantle to Dr George Mpango, another Canadian-trained Organic chemist. Dr Mpango was one of the few students in the department who were able to complete their MSc degrees at Makerere within the stipulated time during the reign of Idi Amin in the mid-70s. He was supervised by Dr (now Professor) Zach Fomum, a Cameroonian, who had earlier completed his PhD under Professor Stephen Landor, shortly before Idi Amin expelled all British expatriates from Uganda. After his MSc, George Mpango proceeded to the USA for his PhD, but for some reason he switched to the University of Waterloo in Canada. At first, he had difficulty coming back to the department; but when I became head, I encouraged him to come back to join hands with the rest of us to rebuild our old department. After a few lean and frustrating years, as far as research was concerned, he submitted a funding proposal to the International Development and Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada for his research on Value Added Products (VAP), with emphasis on cassava. The IDRC accepted his proposal and provided him with a research grant, which included a vehicle for his fieldwork. His interest was to find a way to add value to cassava by discovering new products from the roots of the cassava plant. He presided over the department for three years and during his time, the department started generating some income of its own from which he was able to increase the stock of furniture for students, among other things. Most of the money was coming mainly from hiring out teaching space. It was also during his time as head that the department introduced an MSc degree in Chemistry, based on course work and dissertation, which was a break with tradition. He too served only one term as head.

After George Mpango, Professor Henry Sekaalo, one of the most senior members of staff had a shot at the headship. He had joined the department as Associate Professor in the late 1970s, shortly before I returned from Belfast in
July 1979. He had spent most of his working years in research and he had etched out a successful career. Among his many colleagues I have had the privilege to work with over the years, Henry Sekaalo stands out as one of the most organised and hardworking people I have ever known. During my time as Head in the late 1980s, he took a one-year sabbatical at the University of Texas at Austin, which was a very productive year for him. During that year in Texas, he worked so hard that, in such a short time, he was able to publish several good papers from his research work there. Armed with these and a few more papers from his earlier work at Makerere, he applied and was promoted to full Professor, which I thought was long overdue. Apart from his work and ability to stay focused, Henry Sekaalo is also a man of very strong convictions. Some people thought that those strong convictions could at times make him unnecessarily inflexible. Under his leadership, the department completed the reorganisation of all its courses into a credit unit system that saw the phasing out of the old X and Z options, and replacing them with “major” and “minor” subjects. He was also very much interested in the good things for which the department had become famous in the past. For instance, he made sure that the lawns were always properly manicured and the buildings kept in top clean conditions. In spite of the fact that the department had to do many things for which transport was required, including supervision of Industrial Chemistry students on industrial attachment, the department had never owned a vehicle of its own. Henry Sekaalo saw the need for this and started saving some money from the department's internally-generated income. The University Purchasing Department had never been keen on a second-hand car, but the money Professor Sekaalo had was only enough to buy a used car and he had even identified a suitable one. He convincingly recommended and was allowed to purchase the vehicle, but only after the Estates Manager, a Mechanical Engineer by profession, had inspected it to ascertain its soundness. Finally, the department had a vehicle of its own.

As we have seen elsewhere, the Industrial Chemistry option started in the early 1980s with the UNDP/UNESCO assistance and, like Biochemistry, the option was being offered in the second and third years only until Professor Sekaalo took over as Head of Department. As part of the programme reorganisation and to ensure that the students were adequately grounded in all aspects of Industrial Chemistry, the old two-year course, which had been running since 1985 was transformed into a full-fledged three-year BSc in Industrial Chemistry. Finally, Industrial Chemistry had come of age. From the pioneer class of 1985, a few students who had done well in the final year examinations had been retained for staff development. Moses Bogere was one of those pioneer graduates and had gone on to take a Masters degree in Chemical Engineering at the Middle East Technical University in Turkey. On return, he was appointed full Lecturer in Industrial Chemistry and taught for a while. Fortunately for him, a few years later, he secured another scholarship for a PhD, also in Chemical Engineering at the University of
Akron in Ohio, USA which he successfully completed. This time, he found the opportunities out there too tempting and the inevitable happened. We lost this brilliant young man as part of Africa’s seemingly unstoppable brain drain. The University of Puerto Rico had made him an offer he found hard to resist. Uganda was already difficult enough and for a young man like him, moreover with a young family to look after, an appointment to the rank of Assistant Professor was not something to be turned down for the sake of patriotism.

Gerald Babigonza (now deceased) and Patrick Mwesigye, as well as Tom Okia Okurut from the Chemistry Z stream, went to Nigeria for their MSc at the University of Ife, Ile Ife; the first two on the sponsorship of UNESCO’s African Network for Scientific and Technological Institutions (ANST). We had been fortunate, because all of them came back after completing their degrees, which greatly boosted the staffing situation. Sadly, just as Babigonza was about to go out again for the PhD, he died, which was a big loss to the department. Tom Okia Okurut, who had specialized in Physical Chemistry, also left the university for a job with the National Water and Sewerage Corporation. Later, he joined the International Institute for Environment and Hydraulic Engineering in Delft, Netherlands for his PhD. After the PhD, the Secretariat of the East African Commission offered him a job at the headquarters of the East African Community in Arusha. Despite this setback, Industrial Chemistry still had a reasonable number of staff. Robert Muyanja, the chemical engineer we had recruited from the University of Manchester Institute of Technology in the late 1980s when I was head, was still there. After his MSc in Chemical Engineering in Nigeria, Patrick Mwesigye had secured another scholarship to study for his PhD at the University of Sydney in Australia, after which he came back and continued teaching. There was also Daniel Kasule who, after a BSc in Chemistry Z had gone to China and converted to Chemical Engineering for his MSc. George Nyakairu had also completed a DSc in Austria and was back.

With all these people around, the department was now in a much better staffing position than I had left it at the beginning of the 1990s. There were two full Professors, including Dr David Kanis; two Associate Professors, Dr Bernard Kiremire and Dr Jude Nyangababo. Jude Nyangababo was promoted to full Professor as I was about to leave the university in 2004. In addition, there were five Senior Lecturers, including my PhD student, Dr Jolacom Mbabazi, and Dr Steven Nyanzi another postgraduate student (who was also my student) who had left Makerere in the late 1980s to complete his MSc at the University of Nairobi on a DAAD scholarship and later won another DAAD scholarship for his PhD at the University of Karlsruhe in Germany. The rest were Patrick Mwesigye, George Mpango and long-serving John Sirike Muruum.

After his return from Australia with more than enough publications, Patrick Mwesigye was among the younger members of staff who had quickly risen to
the Senior Lecturer rank and, to the best of my knowledge, the first permanent Industrial Chemistry member of staff to have risen to this rank. In addition to the Ugandans, the department was host to two Visiting Lecturers: Dr N. H. Kirsch from Germany and Dr S. A. Abdul-Ghaffer from Egypt. There was a total of twenty-four members of staff in all. All they needed were the right tools to get on with the job of training future chemists and industrial chemists.

Whenever time and my heavy schedule permitted, I would drop by my old department for a chat with my old colleagues. Occasionally, I would also join them for an end-of-the-year party in the departmental library. It was a reunion I always looked forward to because it was the time I would see old but familiar faces, as well as a few new ones. People like Edward Ssekubunga I had left acting as Chief Technician, Tom Adriko in the office of the Head of Department – the man you could trust with the photocopying of the examination question papers and you would rest assured that nothing would leak from him; Ruhara Budigi, in charge of the Physical Chemistry laboratories; Mrs Betty Musoke, my old time technician in the first year laboratory. The two were promoted in 2003 to the rank of Chief Technicians – the first time the department had had two Chief Technicians at the same time. In fact, Betty Musoke who in her earlier years was handling sophisticated instruments like the Nuclear Magnetic Resonance spectrophotometer, made history when she became the first woman Chief Technician in the department. There was also Jane Kayanja, a lady with a melodic voice; Winfred Yuma, the long-serving chemical stores keeper; John Basajja, one of the few male secretaries in the university; and my old friend, Ignatius Birekyeraho. It was always fun and nostalgic for me to be back there.

In fact, when I returned from Kyambogo to Makerere as Vice Chancellor in 1993, my old department hosted a party to congratulate me on my new appointment and, more than ten years later when time came for me to leave Makerere, they organized a farewell for me. If only I had enough resources at my disposal, I would have done a lot more for my old department, which had contributed so much to the advancement of my career in administration. The best I did was to donate a few brand new computers to equip the new computer laboratory they had set up, a modern Fourier Transform Infrared Spectrophotometer and one or two other things. During the major rehabilitation of the university buildings in 2002, I made sure that the Chemistry Department was included and in the process, the departmental buildings received the much-needed facelift.

Indeed, time runs fast and waits for no man. By 2004, Professor Sekaalo's three years as Head of Department were over and he was out. He too served one term. Probably he would have served another term, but age had caught up with him. It was now the turn of young Steven Nyanzi to step into the shoes. I had known Steven Nyanzi as one of the brilliant Graduate Fellows the university had
recruited in 1978/79 for staff development. I had started him on the MSc under extremely difficult conditions, when security of life and property in Uganda was at its lowest ebb. I recall an incident when he nearly lost his life at the hands of soldiers. He had gone to the Nakivubo channel to collect water samples for his experiments when the unruly UNLF soldiers caught up with him. He was roughed up and in the process the soldiers took the little money he had on him and his wristwatch. It was a scary moment for the young man and me; and so, when DAAD offered him a scholarship, I encouraged him to go to Nairobi to complete his MSc there, even if that meant starting all over again. After this, he proceeded to Germany for his PhD. In fact, he too made some history. He skipped the Lecturer grade, as his first appointment after completing his PhD was Senior Lecturer. This was so because he had done so well at his PhD and had published several papers in highly acclaimed journals. His doctoral thesis also had been published as a book. When the Appointments Board received and viewed his credentials, it decided to appoint him at the Senior Lecturer grade. It was not usual for the Board to make such an appointment. Like late Dr Josephat Kibalama, Steven Nyanzi was another one of those brilliant people who went to a lowly-rated high school but who ably combined Chemistry and Mathematics. He could have specialized in Mathematics if he had chosen to because he was equally good at it; but instead, he found the appeal for Chemistry irresistible.

The Chemistry Department, which is right at the entrance of the Faculty of Science, and certainly one of the oldest and largest in the faculty, has not only trained students of its own, it also used to service the Faculty of Medicine. Before the curriculum change, it used to be a requirement for all first year Medical students to study Chemistry. It also serviced the Faculty of Technology during the new faculty’s formative years in the early 1970s. It was a department that seemed to have a limitless future at Makerere. However, one would have wanted to see more innovative courses as a way of stimulating and reinvigorating interest in the discipline. Nevertheless, I am certainly proud of my roots there.

Faculty of Veterinary Medicine – Minding the Animal Health and Welfare

The creation of the University of East Africa had deprived Makerere of its School of Veterinary Medicine when it was transferred to Kabete, near Nairobi. I learnt much later that even after the University of East Africa had ceased to exist, the campus at Kabete still retained the name Makerere. After the transfer of the School to Kenya in 1963, the old Vet School buildings, situated below the new faculty and overlooking Mulago hill, remained idle for several years until the university decided to turn them into a primary school for the children of staff and the neighbouring community. In 1970, when the University of East Africa ceased to exist, Makerere had to restart its own Veterinary School from scratch. However,
before the construction of the new building for the faculty was half way done, tragedy struck. Like Technology, it was one of those faculties that were caught up in the Idi Amin chaos and confusion. The company Obote’s Government had contracted to construct the new buildings abandoned work. It proved extremely difficulty in the latter years to complete them as they were originally designed. In fact, most of the faculty’s buildings were either poorly finished externally and internally or were never fully completed. The small Animal Hospital on the north-western side of the faculty’s main building, which is sometimes referred to as the Science block, remained unfinished with several of the steel bars that were meant to reinforce the concrete, exposed to the elements and rusting away. The animal houses on the east of the main Science block were eventually completed, but several buildings between the Science block and Livingstone Hall remained at the foundation stage. No one has ever found money to complete them. Like the Faculty of Technology that suffered a similar fate, nearly all departments, teaching and research laboratories, the dean’s office, staff offices, lecture rooms, the small animal clinic and the specialised library, were all crammed in the Science block.

I think it is quite legitimate for one to ask why up to the time I left, over thirty years on, the university had failed to complete all the buildings in the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine. As we have seen before, the problem with the Science disciplines – of which Veterinary Medicine is one – was that they did not generate sufficient income of their own, from which savings could be made and ploughed back into infrastructure development. Donors too were less inclined to provide money for a building. We had only two fall-back positions: either to continue reminding the Government that it was its responsibility to provide funds to complete the buildings, which had remained unfinished for years, or to divert some of the university’s own income earned from other sources. For a while, we used both sources when the Treasury was still allocating a little money to the university for the capital development budget. There was always some money in the capital development budget, which the Government used to earmark for specific construction works in the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine until 1997 when that source dried up. Some of that money was used to complete the animal houses and the Science block. However, due to the problem of constant leakage, the original flat roof on the block had to be covered with corrugated iron sheets. This was not part of the original design, but had to be done out of necessity. We also used the Government funds to complete a small house at the far north of the Science block, which now houses the new Department of Wildlife and Animal Resources Management (WARM), as well as a Pathology amphitheatre between WARM and the Science block, fully equipped with a modern cold room. The parking lot in front of the Science building also needed proper sealing, but we had no money left to do it.

When I returned to Makerere from Kyambogo, Dr Jackson Nakasala Situma was the Dean of this relatively young faculty. The old big guns had given way
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to the young generation of academic vets. Situma Nakasala, a dynamic young man, was one of them. He had studied Veterinary Medicine at Makerere during the ‘70s and had gone to Germany for a doctorate in the same discipline. There was some discussion within the faculty at the time as to whether a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine earned from German universities was equivalent to a PhD or was a lower qualification. As far as I recall, that was never quite resolved. Some argued that it was its equivalent, others thought it was a lower qualification. That aside, at the time, we never suspected that Nakasala Situma was terminally sick. Over time, he started getting weak, but he was not ready to give up without a fight. He was unbelievably a man of extreme courage and stamina. In spite of his ill health, he continued with a full load of teaching and administrative responsibilities, even when the illness had totally disfigured his face. In fact, he had become a sad sight to see at meetings. After a short spell at Mulago Hospital, he died and was buried at his ancestral home in the hills at the foot of Mount Elgon or Masaba Mountains, a place I had never visited before. In his death, the university had lost a brilliant and resourceful individual, who had tried so hard to build a faculty on a shoe-string budget.

Dr Situma Nakasala had taken over the deanship of the faculty after Professors Charles Katongole and Frederick Kayanja, who made up the first generation of African members of staff, had seen the faculty off its feet in its most difficult formative years in the ‘70s, but in spite of their heroic efforts to save the faculty from premature closure, a lot remained to be done. Nakasala Situma had come into administration after President Museveni had appointed George Kagonyera Mondo, a PhD graduate of the University of California at Davis, who was then Dean of the faculty, Minister of Animal Industry. After the departure of Mondo Kagonyera, the faculty lost yet another senior member of staff and veteran. The Government decided to appoint Professor Gustavas Sennyonga, a PhD holder in Veterinary Parasitology from the University of Edinburgh, as Permanent Secretary to the former Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. Unfortunately, his appointment as Permanent Secretary was also the beginning of his troubles, which saw him incarcerated for a while. When Professor Sennyonga went to Luzira, we could not help feeling sorry for him. Many of his students and colleagues fondly remembered him as an excellent Professor of Animal Parasitology and a jovial personality. He was one of the most genial colleagues I had ever met. As the faculty was rallying from the loss of its senior members of staff, Professor Justin Epelu Opio, who had been the pillar in the Department of Veterinary Anatomy after the departure of Professor Kayanja, also left after his appointment as Deputy Vice Chancellor of Makerere University in September 1993. That was the situation that Dr Situma found himself in when he took over as Dean. In his relatively short time and despite the teething problems, there were several things Dr Situma did for his faculty. Besides shouldering the heavy responsibility as Dean and being sick, he continued to publish scholarly works in reputable
scientific journals, which in turn earned him promotion. At the time of his death, he had risen to the rank of Associate Professor.

It was during Dr Situma’s time as Dean that the faculty intensified its linkage with the Free University of Berlin. Through this linkage, the faculty hosted German students studying some aspects of tropical Veterinary Medicine, among other interesting bilateral activities for periods ranging from a few weeks to three months. At about the same time, the German Government technical cooperation arm (GTZ) was also actively engaged in the reinvigoration of the faculty through the provision of technical experts, who taught and supervised students, along with providing badly needed equipment. I once visited the faculty in my early years as Vice Chancellor and was pleasantly surprised to meet the GTZ team leader, who introduced herself to me as Mrs Mwanje. Coincidentally, this same name, Mwanje, happens to be my second son’s surname. She quickly pointed out that although she was German, she was married to a Ugandan from Buganda, who belonged to the leopard clan. I told her that I also belonged to the same clan and by custom, was her husband too. We had a good laugh which turned out to be a good icebreaker to an informative tour of the faculty. Situma also oversaw the completion of some structures that had remained unfinished for a long time and the establishment of Buyana Stock Farm as one of the faculty’s teaching facilities. The GTZ brought Dr Wandeck, whose job was to help manage and oversee the redevelopment of the former run-down farm. It was also during his time that the faculty initiated the South African Boer goat-rearing scheme, which he personally supervised. These exotic goats, with their familiar white and brown fur coats, big udders, drooping ears and backward-bent horns, soon attracted the attention of the Ugandan farmers. At the time, in the mid- and late 1990s, a big breeding he-goat or burke weighing close to 90 kg was going for as much as two hundred thousand shillings. Dr Wandeck and his wife stayed full-time on the University Farm in rural Buyana, some 90 or so kilometres west of Kampala, coming only occasionally to Kampala and to Makerere to collect consumables, teaching materials and pay-cheques for his farm workers.

Dr Wandeck was an amazing man. As soon as he settled down in Buyana, he began making friends with the people in the local community, who lived around the farm. He became even more popular when, after the farm water reticulation had been inaugurated, he decided to provide the communities living in the villages surrounding the farm with clean and safe water. I remember the first time I visited the farm with Dean Nakasala Situma and my colleagues in the University Administration. Dr Wandeck had organised his “village mates” (as he used to call them) to put up a show of traditional Kiganda singing, drumming and dancing to welcome us to Buyana and to thank Makerere University for allowing them to access clean water from the University Farm. It was quite a show, with him participating in the dancing. His “village mates” also liked him for something
else. He provided them with employment as farm workers, a rare opportunity for them to earn a regular income. I must confess that I found it rather confounding and outlandish to see a sophisticated German living deep in rural Uganda and being at home with the local communities and the rural environment. He fitted in quite nicely. His wife helped him with the farm accounts and records. It was a life that both of them seemed to have enjoyed. It was also about this time that we began to see the herd of Ankole cattle that President Museveni had given to the faculty as experimental animals start to multiply. The herd had hardly grown before Dr Wandeck took over as Farm Manager, which left us wondering what was happening there and why the herd had not grown in over five years. Different explanations were given but none convinced me. Besides poor management, the plausible explanation was that someone who was in charge of the farm was secretly selling the young animals. In addition to the growing herd, I was amazed to see a huge Ankole bull, which weighed close to 500 kg according to the Farm Manager's estimate. Besides their huge horns and unlike the Zebus of Teso and Karamoja and the Borans of Southern Ethiopia, Ankole cows are generally low live weight cattle. That one was a giant, the type of elite Ankole cow Professor Kiwuwa of the Faculty of Agriculture was looking for.

There were also several other equally important things that happened while Situma was still Dean. However, it was most unfortunate and regrettable that during his last years as Dean, rumours started flying about implicating some senior members of his faculty in sexual harassment scandals. Some female students started alleging that some prominent and fairly senior members of staff in the faculty were menacingly demanding for sex from them and threatening whoever was not willing to comply with poor grades and failure. Although the allegations had for several months been the subject of hearsay at the department, we failed to establish the truth, because the students who were making the allegations failed to come forward to substantiate them and without a smoking gun, it was difficult to prove anything. Nevertheless, those were serious allegations that nearly disgraced a few senior members of staff, whom the students had accused of being the perpetrators of the hideous practice. On the other hand, members of staff whom the students had implicated in the sex-for-marks scandals felt deeply bruised and hurt, but they too found it difficult to seek redress in the courts of law, because the allegations were anonymous.

After the death of Dr Nakasala Situma, the faculty had to look for a new Dean. After a fiercely contested election, Dr Elly Katunguka-Rwakishaya, a specialist in Medicine, the equivalent of a physician in human medical terms, emerged as the winner. The aftermath of that election, which included a lot of acrimonious statements, made us wonder whether the idea of electing Deans and Heads of Departments was not going contrary to Professor George Kirya's ideals. As I said before, Professor Kirya was the Vice Chancellor under whose
administration the University adopted the new democratic method of electing Heads of Departments and Deans. After this election, I began to see worrying signs. It looked like the fiercely contested elections were beginning to polarise departments and faculties along so many lines of all sorts of allegiance. I was once compelled to voice my concern in Senate about these dangerous signs which had begun to erode the very fabric of the fraternity and collegiality spirit for which Makerere University was known and which had helped to keep it together as a community, even in the toughest of times. The majority of the Senate members, while admitting that the system had flaws, expressed the view that it was a much better and preferred system, as opposed to the old system of appointing Heads, Deans and Directors. Although the debate ended there, we remained concerned about this unfolding trend of events. However, instead of rolling back the clock by re-introducing a system which had been rejected long time ago, we decided to respect the wishes of the majority. In so doing, we hoped and prayed that the situation would not spiral out of control, where the negative effects of the system would not become too destructive to the detriment of the harmony that had hitherto existed in the university.

For some reason, Veterinary Medicine was one of the few faculties, if not the only one at the time, that had a male Senior Personal Secretary to the Dean, Mathew Mutabuuza. Before coming to the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Mutabuuza had served in the Department of Geography as secretary for many years and, after further training, he was promoted to the rank of Senior Personal Secretary, which was the topmost grade for secretaries at Makerere. At the time, only Deans and the university’s top administrators were entitled to senior personal secretaries. So after his promotion, Mutabuuza had to leave the Geography Department. It was the University Secretary’s responsibility to deploy secretaries on the advice of the Personnel Department. About the time Mutabuuza was promoted, the Dean of Veterinary Medicine had no Senior Personal Secretary, so the University Secretary decided to deploy him there. The Dean had no choice but to accept his new secretary. Apparently, the chemistry between the two men seemed to have worked well enough for the two to stay together without any squabbles. The one thing I recall about Mutabuuza during the difficult 1980s was the beer bar he used to run in the small house that had remained in the car park on the northern side of the Faculty of Agriculture, which served as a watering hole for the thirsty souls. Then, beer was a scarce commodity in the country, but Mutabuuza had found a way of getting it and sold it at very reasonable price. His little bar was a popular evening meeting place for Makerere staff, regardless of rank and social status. Unfortunately, he went out of business because many of his patrons were drinking the beer on credit and failed to pay. However, the times were changing fast. Competition outside the university, particularly at Wandegeya, was intensifying. Compared to the new drinking places outside the university, his bar had become too small to survive.
Dr Elly Katunguka-Rwakishaya, a graduate of Makerere for the Bachelors degree in Veterinary Medicine and holder of a Master of Veterinary Medicine from University College, Dublin in Ireland and a PhD from the University of Glasgow in Scotland, worked hard to get the faculty going again. He was one of the smartest members of staff. He was both intellectual and fashionable. I remember my wife referring to him as the “smart boy”, but his opponents often accused him of being too brash.

During Katunguka-Rwakishaya’s time as Dean, the faculty underwent several changes. One thing the new Dean kept reminding me about was the absence of equipment and suitable means of transport to take students for field training and to maintain the ambulatory service. Students, particularly the graduating class, had a lot to learn from the hands-on experience the ambulatory services offered. Fortunately for him, his relentless reminders eventually paid off. Somehow, I was able to find some money to take care of some of his urgent needs. On several occasions, I used spare time and visited the faculty. The visits proved very informative because, through them, I was able to form first-hand impressions of the magnitude of the problems the faculty was facing, instead of relying solely on reports and the Dean’s pleas. We were convinced that fieldwork, which involved taking students out to farms, was a vital component of their practical training and therefore, a top priority. We looked for the money and bought two thirty-seater buses to take care of the immediate transport needs. Even with the two new small buses, we had not solved all the faculty’s transport problems. The two small buses were not off-road vehicles, but they could only take students to Buyana and a few other places. Although we could now take students to Buyana regularly, we were still not able to take them to real problem areas – the farmers’ farms. The only four-wheel drive station wagon the faculty had was too old and kept breaking down; and the University Bursar, Ben Byambambazi, had started complaining about the rising maintenance and fuel costs. The Faculty needed a reliable vehicle. When Dr Elizabeth Kyewalabye took over as Head of the Department of Medicine, the first favour she asked from me was a reliable vehicle. Her concern was that without sufficient field training and exposure to the hands-on practical experience, the faculty would be passing out half-baked Vets that would give the it and the university a bad name. The pressure from her and the Dean, who coincidentally came from the same department, was becoming too much for me to resist any more.

The several visits I had made to the faculty had also revealed a lot to me about the appalling state of the undergraduate laboratories. We came to the inevitable conclusion that the laboratories were in urgent need of re-equipment and modernising. We had to find money fairly quickly to revamp them with new and modern equipment and supplies. The responsibility fell on the Vice Chancellor as the university’s chief academic officer. It was both a challenge and
a dilemma for me. How could I raise the money to fix all these problems in such a short time? But as we had seen it, the problems called for a quick fix. After scratching my head for a while, I came up with an idea: why not use the interest earned on the university’s Endowment Fund in London, which we used to refer to as the Crown Agent fund, to solve some of these problems? I decided to float the idea to my colleagues. We all agreed that it was a good idea. It was not a lot of money, but we were convinced that even that little money would make a huge difference between putting a student through five years of training without ever using a working modern microscope and having access to one that worked. We then decided to seek approval from the University Council to use some of that money to buy new equipment for the faculty.

Incidentally, even the Chairman of the University Council then, Dr David Matovu – a seasoned biologist in his own right – had already expressed concern about the state of the laboratories in some science-based disciplines. It was, therefore, a meeting of like minds. We had to tread carefully though, lest we were accused of practising favouritism; after all, the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Professor Epelu Opio, was one of the faculty’s big guns. People would automatically assume he was using his new position to dish goodies to his old faculty. To counter such an accusation, we decided to carry out a critical examination of all the needs of all science-based faculties and how we could raise the money to take care of their problems.

When all was said and done, I made it a point that I would have a louder voice in the way the money from London would be distributed to faculties. I wanted to make sure that the faculties that were in the direst need got the lion’s share of the little money. I had visited all the affected faculties and I had a good idea about their equipment needs. I had less than a million pounds, so I had to choose carefully which faculty or department got a share of it. According to the results of my needs assessment, Veterinary Medicine had the greatest need. It therefore received the lion’s share of the funds; some US$ 200,000. For reasons I never quite understood, Crown Agent had decided to release the money to us in US dollars and not in UK pounds. Nevertheless, it was better than nothing at all. The Faculty of Veterinary Medicine’s allocation included money for a brand new four-wheel drive vehicle, a new engine for the old Land Cruiser and an assortment of laboratory equipment that included modern and more powerful microscopes and personal computers. All deliveries were received. The only problem reported to me after the faculty had taken delivery of the vehicle and new equipment was that the Dean had decided to keep the new vehicle at his office. I decided not to intervene; after all, the man had struggled hard to extract a few new things from me. Secondly, I was not in the mood to embark on new wars about the sharing of the vehicles and equipment when all I was looking forward to was my forthcoming retirement.
Besides the vehicles and new equipment bought out of the Crown Agent fund, the Department of Veterinary Pathology was also enjoying a new amphitheatre, fully equipped with a working cold room and facilities to hang and move animal cadavers. The Head of Department, Professor Ojok Lonzy, could not contain his excitement with the new facility. He had been longing for such a facility for many years. Finally, his dream had come true. Like the other buildings that made up the Veterinary Medicine complex, the theatre had been planned in the late 60s and early 70s, but it had never been completed. We had mobilised resources from the university’s small capital development budget to complete the facility. Now, the department had a place where they could teach all aspects of animal pathology. The creation of a fully equipped and up-to-date food analysis laboratory in the faculty was also a big achievement for Professor Katunguka.

Besides being used as a teaching and research facility, the laboratory served as a supplementary source of badly needed revenue for the faculty. It carried out food and animal feed analysis on behalf of the public, a service for which it charged a fee. Besides the University Administration’s effort to complete the buildings that were left uncompleted in the ‘70s, the Dean too looked around, found some money and gave the Science block a new coat of paint and a general facelift. In the dry season, dust was a constant menace in the faculty. The untarmacked parking lot was the source of much of this dust. The wind would blow the stuff right into the building, wreaking havoc on its sensitive equipment and making everything around look very filthy, as if no one ever cared about the cleanliness of the faculty’s premises. In the wet season, it was another story. Mud was all over the place; staff and students carried it inside the building and soiled the floors. The building had to be constantly swept to maintain some semblance of cleanliness. For a long time, I had struggled to find money to seal the parking lot to no avail. It had become an eyesore which we had to live with, no matter how much I hated it.

Getting money was always tight, very tight indeed, and there were far more important and pressing needs the University Bursar had to spend the little money available on. So, tarmacking a parking lot was certainly not top on his list of priorities. I therefore gave up the idea. Fortunately, Dean Katunguka-Rwakishaya was able to find some money and, without much ado, he had the job beautifully done. Only the small patch of the access road to the faculty besides Livingstone Hall remained untarmacked, but I was hopeful that, someday in the near future, that patch would be tarmacked too.

As we grappled with the problem of academic decay, several members of staff in the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine who had long given up on the idea of studying for the PhD degree suddenly revived their interest in the idea. Perhaps they had heard the wake-up call and seen the handwriting on the wall signalling the fact that the days of academic malaise were drawing to an end and fast giving
way to renewed confidence in Makerere as one of the leading institutions of higher learning on the African continent. Instead of spending much of their valuable time and energy in occupations that had very little to do with their academic advancement, though crucial to their survival and their families, time had come for them to order their priorities right in favour of their academic career. It was not that the university had dramatically improved their salaries overnight, far from it; the living wage was still far beyond their reach. It must have been something else that was inspiring them to return to the research laboratories, either at Makerere or abroad, and get started on the tough road that would eventually lead to the acquisition of the PhD degree. In fact, many members of staff in the Veterinary Medicine Faculty had completed their PhDs long before late Professor Mujaju had written and presented his famous report and before the university had created the Staff Development Fund. It was a joy to see colleagues like Ojok Lonzy, who had had a brilliant undergraduate career at Makerere, trained for his Doctor of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Giessen in Germany, had several diplomas from Kassel University, and bagged his PhD degree at Makerere; and George William Nasimanya of the Department of Veterinary Public Health and Preventive Medicine who got his own PhD from the University of Guelph in Canada. While at Guelph, Professor John Opuda-Asibo acted as his co-supervisor on the Makerere side. On his return to Uganda, with several publications to his credit, Dr Nasimanya was quickly promoted to Senior Lecturer and subsequently elected Head of his department. In spite of his relatively advanced age, Edmund Mugabi Bukenya too, a zoologist that Professor Kayanja recruited for the Department of Veterinary Anatomy in the ‘80s and who later became the Head of the same department, decided to have a crack at it at University of Cape Town in South Africa. He was one of the members of staff to have received sponsorship from the university’s Staff Development Fund. Some of us were a bit apprehensive about his ability to cope with the rigorous requirements of the PhD programme. In fact, I took a bit of time to approve his sponsorship on behalf of the Staff Development Committee. We were in for a pleasant surprise. He completed the degree within the time limit and even asked me to give him a year so he could take a post-doctoral appointment at the University of the Western Cape, which I gladly granted. I had no reason to deny him the opportunity after he had pleasantly surprised me. Unfortunately, as he was settling down to recover from his PhD grilling days at Cape Town and to celebrate his hard-earned achievement, his long-time wife, Agnes who had worked as a Senior Assistant Registrar at Makerere for many years, died rather suddenly. Death, in its funny ways, rudely cut the joy of his achievement short.

Dr Rose Azuba Musoke, an avid tennis player, who had started out as a Clinical Officer in the Department of Veterinary Medicine – one of those unique positions in the university establishment – registered for her PhD at Makerere. After a few gruelling years, she received it and later the Appointments Board gave
her a substantive appointment as Lecturer in the same department. Others like Drs Elizabeth Kyewalabye, Odoi Agricola and O. Olila went to the University of Nairobi for their PhDs. Dr Ruth Muwazi of Veterinary Anatomy also obtained hers from Makerere under Professor Fredrick Kayanja in 1995, with part of the work done in Germany. When Professors Kayanja and Epelu Opiyo left the department, Ruth Muwazi had the arduous task of keeping it going amidst acute staff shortages, until Dr Mugabi Bukunya took over. Dr Christopher Rubaire-Akiiki of Veterinary Pathology and Microbiology was another colleague who had stuck it out during Makerere’s bleak days and had seen the thick and thin of Makerere’s difficulties. For some years, he seemed to have hit a dead end and had stagnated at Lecturer level. I was happy to see him receive his PhD in 1996. After the PhD and because he was now publishing quality papers out of his research work, he started rising quite rapidly through the ranks. At the time of my retirement, he had made it to the Associate Professor grade. Professor Johnson Acon was another person with a track record that amazed me. First, he was a man who seemed to enjoy the best that life could offer. He was one of the vets at Makerere that had won the confidence of several expatriates working in Uganda who happened to have animal pets like dogs and cats. They unreservedly entrusted the care of their pets to him. Given this background, you would not have expected him to come across as a serious academic, but he was. After his MSc at the University of Florida, he came back to his old faculty and for a while he seemed to have forgotten about the PhD. After sorting himself out, he decided to register for it at Makerere and before long, he had completed it. What followed the PhD was promotion. As he churned out high quality publications, promotions kept coming until he was appointed full Professor in the Department of Veterinary Surgery and Reproduction, the second Professor there after the return of Professor J. S. Ogaa from the University of Zimbabwe, where he had taken refuge during the difficult times Uganda went through in the ’70s and ’80s.

Professor John Opuda-Asibo was one of the few Heads of Departments who impressed me for the vision they had for the future of their departments. The Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, like the rest of the university, had been dogged with staff shortages for a long time. The Department of Veterinary Medicine, of which he was Head, was one of the departments that was experiencing serious staff shortage. As we have seen, the situation in this department was not typical of other departments in this faculty at the time. On one extreme end of the scale, you had a few remaining greying and ageing members of staff, most of them inherited from the defunct University of East Africa; and on the other, a growing population of very young staff, the majority of them armed with only a Bachelors degree in Veterinary Medicine. The gap in-between was virtually empty. In an academic institution like a university, a bottom-heavy staffing situation is regarded as unhealthy. The young and inexperienced members of staff need academic leadership that only the more senior and experienced staff
can provide. This was the situation that Professor Opuda-Asibo, who had taken over the headship of the Department of Veterinary Public Health and Preventive Medicine, after completing his Master of Public Health and PhD degrees at the University of Minnesota in the USA, found himself contending with. For the solution, he devised a simple plan: send out as many of your young members of staff for their advanced degrees and, in the meantime, carry most of their teaching load yourself and wait for them to return. When he floated the idea to me, it sounded a crazy thing. I told him he was in for a quick burn-out. “How sure are you that they would come back?” I asked. His reply was again simple. He just said he was prepared to gamble on it. His colleagues, who saw him struggle with a heavy teaching load, wondered whether he had made the right decision to let so many of his staff go out at the same time, leaving him almost alone in the department. One day, he came to me, asking whether we could help him hire some part-time lecturers although in the course of our short discussion, he told me that he was not overly worried that he had let so many of his Assistant Lecturers and Teaching Assistants go for their Masters and PhD degrees at almost the same time. He was confident that in a few years’ time, his department would be in a stronger position than ever before. I concurred with him.

How dead right he was! By June 2004, the Department of Veterinary Public Health and Preventive Medicine had long ceased to be a one-man department. Out of a staff strength of eight, six of them were PhD holders, the highest number of PhDs in any single department in the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine. What was even more interesting was the fact that, after completing their studies abroad, the majority of them returned to their department. He sacrificially built the future of his department and of Makerere University. It is also perhaps worth noting that all the PhDs in his department were obtained abroad, thus minimizing the risk of excessive in-breeding. Some of them attended the topmost universities in the USA and excelled. For example, while studying for his PhD at the University of Louisiana, Dr E. Kagambe made an impression on his professors there as he turned out to be an outstanding student. In fact, if all his young staff, who went to the USA came back, Professor Opuda-Asibo would have had a lot more PhDs in the department. Another young man, Dr S. R. Were went to the University of Edinburgh for his MSc and proceeded to Cornell University at Ithaca, upstate New York, for the PhD which he successfully completed and came back. We have already alluded to Dr Nasimanya, who went to Ohio State University in the USA for his MSc and then to Guelph in Ontario Canada for his PhD.

Dr Francis Ejobi went to the University of Saarland in the West of Germany for his PhD. In 1998, on my DAAD-sponsored tour of some German universities, I visited his university and found him busy finalising his bench work and beginning to put his PhD thesis together. I had the opportunity to share a moment with his supervisor, Professor Muller, who had very high opinion of his young student's
intellectual ability and the teaching standards at Makerere. Indeed, Francis lived up to our expectations and graduated within the stipulated time. After his PhD in Germany, he immediately returned to Makerere. By the time Professor Opuda-Asibo left the department for the School of Postgraduate Studies, where I had given him an appointment as acting Director of the School – following the death of the substantive Director, Professor John Mugerwa – he was leaving a department that was in an excellent shape. That is what I call vision. Interestingly, in spite of carrying an extraordinarily heavy teaching load, Professor Opuda-Asibo kept an active research programme of his own. He kept publishing his work in internationally-recognised journals. The list of journal papers is impressively long and with the long list of publications came promotion. By the time I came back to Makerere as Vice Chancellor in late 1993, he was a Senior Lecturer, but in a space of less than eight years, he had moved through the ranks to become a full Professor.

As I saw all these interesting developments unfold in the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and other faculties, I kept asking myself, “Was all this quest to return to the old roots of academic excellence that Makerere had always been known for, the work of some form of magic?” I had no simple answer. I could not pin it down to good salaries; after all, pay was just marginally better. People were still struggling to make ends meet, so the salary could not have been the key motivator. However, one thing was certain: something had inspired in us the confidence and the zeal that led so many members of staff to return to the good things some of them had long given up – excellent academics. As every schoolboy knows, research and the publications as well as the advanced degrees that come from it are the hallmark of a university in good academic standing. Perhaps after many years of trying to bootstrap itself out of its difficulties, providence was at work for Makerere; perhaps people just began to feel good again about themselves and about their good old university, as if they were saying, “Let us put the past behind us and get on with the present and the future”. As they say, “You cannot change yesterday, but today and tomorrow you can shape.” And that was what Makerere did. While some people, as expected, were bent on criticising us, rightly or wrongly for allegedly letting standards at Makerere fall, our quiet revolution was just edging forward unrelentingly and, for those who cared to see, the results were out in the open. We were back on the road, walking the long walk to the pinnacle of academic excellence as exemplified by the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine.

Professor Opuda-Asibo happened to be one of Makerere’s academics in this re-awakening period. A Fulbright scholar and a meticulous worker – perhaps sometimes too meticulous for the liking of some people – he came to the Graduate School with the same kind of enthusiasm. Besides heading his department, the four-and-a-half-year stint he had as Acting Director of the Graduate School
and his competence and outstanding achievements as a scholar, Professor Asibo was an excellent example of the people who kept Makerere ticking despite the difficulties. I had expected him to move on to higher things in the University Administration and I was sure he would. Shortly before I retired, he came close to being my successor. He came very close to getting there, but never quite crossed the bridge. I guessed some of his colleagues did not quite know what to make of him. I wondered why and ventured to ask some people whom I thought knew him well. Wherever I inquired and whoever I asked, the answer that came back was the same. Everyone agreed that Professor Opuda-Asibo was an excellent academic, but always hastened to add that they thought he was too strict and needed to work more on his Public Relations (PR). People believed that his strict temperament was best suited for a technocrat, but not for leadership. One day, while having a tat-a-tat with him, I took it upon myself to ask him if he was aware that his peers were failing to recognise his potential as a leader; that they strongly believed, rightly or wrongly, that he was too much of a no-nonsense man and wished if only he could be a little more flexible. He too seemed to be aware of this problem and he knew that his adversaries kept pinning it on him as a weakness. According to him, they used it to scare away his supporters from him. He was well aware that he had become a victim of his insistence on professionalism, excellence, efficiency and effectiveness and always demanding only the very best from those working under him. This had sometimes gotten him into trouble with his colleagues, especially when he was serving as Director of the Graduate School. However, given his potential, I know for sure that someday he would make it to top leadership, perhaps with a little mentoring, though probably not at Makerere. I was grateful to him for the many difficult assignments he used to do for Senate. Whenever Senate identified some serious problem within a department or faculty that called for an investigation, like high failure rate or a slackening of standards, Senate would throw the tart assignment at Professor Opuda-Asibo, knowing fully well that without fear or favour he would turn everything and anything in his wake upside down until he came to the bottom of the truth, with a hard hitting report, delivered on time with a full dissection of the problem and a way forward. Perhaps these assignments also contributed to his rather low popularity with his peers, but I personally found him a pleasure to work with.

The next best thing to have happened in the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine during my time was the opening of Professor George Lubega’s Molecular Biology Laboratory, the first of its kind at Makerere. Professor Lubega, a McGill University PhD graduate, was one of the few members of staff at Makerere with a good nose for research grants and the skills to write grant-winning research proposals. As soon as he returned from Canada and settled down in his old Department of Veterinary Parasitology and Microbiology, he started thinking of how he could sustain the research tempo he had come back with from Canada, in a department that hardly had any equipment that one could use for serious research. He chose,
among his research interests, to focus on an old zoonotic disease problem – trypanosomiasis, the cause of sleeping sickness in humans and nagana in cattle. The parasites, the trypanosomes which cause the disease use the tsetse fly as the vector to jump from the animals to humans and vice versa. Over the years, there has been a concerted effort all over Africa, the region most affected by the menace of the disease, to eliminate the tsetse fly – the parasite’s main vector – with limited success. The search for a vaccine had also been an exercise in futility. The vaccine had eluded scientists for decades. Professor Lubega decided to have a crack at the unsolved vaccine development problem, using the new techniques of Molecular Biology. To raise funds for his research, he submitted proposals to funding agencies, and he eventually succeeded in securing funds from the World Health Organisation in Geneva, Switzerland.

Being a new field, he had to build up a new laboratory within the Science block of the faculty which houses most of the departments. He found space in the eastern wing of the building and placed an order for his equipment. It so happened that one piece of equipment was too big to fit into the small room. It could not be fitted in the room without knocking down a few walls. As he began knocking the walls down, he ran into problems with some of officials in the University Administration who were in charge of space allocation and utilisation. He was ordered to stop immediately, citing as reason the fact that he had done it without going through the proper university machinery and therefore, was doing it without permission. That was despite the fact that the faculty had allowed him to go ahead. The whole thing turned into a heated argument and nearly stalled the entire project, moreover at the risk of losing his grant. It was a glitch we had to fix as fast as we could and we did. My view was that if he were not making substantial alterations to the building that required planning approval, why not let him go ahead and have his expensive equipment installed as quickly as possible before the warranty expired. In the end common sense prevailed, and the University Council gave him permission to go ahead with the alterations he wanted to make, but insisted that the structural integrity of the building had to be safeguarded. Therefore, a qualified engineer had to supervise the demolition work. The equipment was installed and the laboratory was soon fully operational.

Professor Lubega’s Molecular Biology laboratory had the latest state-of-the-art equipment you could find anywhere in the world. When he started publishing his research findings in international journals, his work caught the attention of some scholars in the USA. For as long as I can remember, American Professors have been coming to Makerere over the years as Fulbright fellows, primarily to teach. However, Professor Lubega succeeded in being the first person at Makerere to attract a Fulbright fellow from the USA, primarily to conduct research in his new laboratory. Professor Lubega’s story was one of the best success stories that ever occurred at Makerere during my time as Vice Chancellor. It made me feel proud
about the quality of the academic staff we had. I had made it a habit whenever I hosted important guests to take them to the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine to showcase the exciting things that were happening in Professor Lubega’s laboratory, sometimes at very short notice, sometimes without notice at all. What used to captivate me was the fact that every time I took my visitors there, I found Professor Lubega and his research students, who at one time included a German student, busy at work in the main section of the laboratory and in the clean and dark rooms where they carried out experiments on DNA and things to do with electrophoresis. Professor Lubega never got tired of receiving me and explaining to my visitors the research they were conducting in their hi-tech laboratory. If he did, he never expressed it openly, a mark of refinement of manners and speech around others. He would always go out of his way to offer a simple explanation about what they were doing. It seemed his funders too were impressed by his work, because whenever he asked for more funding, it kept coming. The one requirement his donors always asked him to fulfil was that the Vice Chancellor had to endorse all his grant applications and that I religiously accomplished on his behalf until I left the university.

The many publications that kept coming out of this work translated into rapid promotion for him. From Lecturer, Dr Lubega rose quickly through the ranks and, in 2003, he was promoted to full Professor in the Department of Veterinary Parasitology and Microbiology, a department that had gone without a full Professor for many years after the departure of Professor Sennyonga. While some of his colleagues who had been members of staff much longer than him were still busy marking time for reasons best known to them, Professor Lubega made it to the top in no time. Professor Lubega’s example was to me a clear illustration of what I so often used to tell members of staff that, ingenuity, imagination, hard and quality work always paid handsome dividends to those who laboured. In fact, my long-time friend, Professor Elly Sabiiti, sometimes used to tease me by referring to me as “Mr Publish or Perish”, because I perpetually emphasised the need for academic members of staff (junior and senior) to stay active in research and to publish their results, even if they were looking for a rose and, in its place, found a weed. That way, they would avoid being academically thumped by their junior contemporaries. Besides the publications and the PhDs coming out of the laboratories, Professor Lubega conceived the idea of launching a two-year taught MSc course in Molecular Biology. There was no such course at Makerere before.

Although the Department of Veterinary Public Health and Preventive Medicine had the highest number of PhDs amongst its staff, other departments too were slowly catching up. We have already come across some examples. However, this success story would not be complete without mentioning a few younger vets in the faculty who had done equally well. Unfortunately, we lost a few on the way who went out for their PhDs but chose not to return. They
became part of Africa’s brain haemorrhage. Many are still stuck in the USA. However, out of those who thought home was best and returned, some had taken over the leadership mantle of their respective departments. Below are examples of the young staff who went out for either MScs or PhDs and came back to serve Makerere, the institution that had given them the opportunity to study for advanced degrees abroad: P. Waiswa who went to Imperial College London for his MSc and PhD; and D. Nalwanga, one of the brightest female students the faculty had ever had, who went to Cornell for the MSc and to Glasgow for the PhD. By the time I left, she had not returned. Sadly for her, while studying abroad her husband died. M. J. Musenero was another female young member of staff who also went for her MSc at Cornell; E. Nyatia went for an MSc at Edinburgh; R. Barigye, for the MSc at the University of London; B. M. Kanyima, MSc Michigan; M. G. Nassuna, MSc Alberta, Canada; R. Twayonyere, MSc Edinburgh; M. S. Mulaiteyo-Kaahwa, MSc Brunei; J. B. Nizeyi, MSc Colorado, USA; G. M. Kamugisha, MSc Punjab; I. Naigaga, MSc Rhodes, South Africa; and J. D. Kabasa, PhD at Gottingen University in Germany.

When time came for Professor Katunguka-Rwakishaya to step down as Dean at the end of his two terms, the majority of members of staff in the faculty believed that Dr Kabasa, young as he was, was the obvious successor. They elected him the new Dean of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine. Before I stepped down as Vice Chancellor, I was happy to see the gap between the young and old staff in this faculty slowly closing. In 1993 when I took over as Vice Chancellor, I thought it would take years to close the gap. My pessimism was based on the fact that at the time very few young people were being appointed there and the few that were there appeared to have stagnated.

I believe we had built for the future of Veterinary Medicine at Makerere, thanks to our development partners, such as the World Bank, that provided the funds for the Agricultural Research and Training Programme (ARTP) that granted several young members of staff the faculty scholarships to study abroad; the Government of Uganda, which negotiated for the funds from the World Bank and our own Staff Development Fund, as well as the home-grown capacity at Makerere to supervise MSc and PhD students; many young members of staff studied for the MSc and PhD degrees at Makerere. The University of Nairobi too trained, and continues to train, several of our young and sometimes not so young staff at Kabete. South Africa too, especially the University of Pretoria, had offered another avenue for the MSc and PhD training. Before I left the university we had a couple of students at the University of Pretoria, including Dr L. M. Koma, who was Head of the Department of Veterinary Surgery and Reproduction for many years, and my personal vet, Edmund Bizimemyera. A few found their way to Rhodes University and Stellenbosch University. The latter two universities did not have specialised schools but had departments which taught
The challenge that faced the university now was the capacity to retain these young budding PhDs. The question of a living wage and even a development wage had to be squarely addressed. In order to keep this calibre of highly intelligent young staff, the university had to become a competitive employer. Perhaps that would be one of the ways of attracting back even those who had defected to places like the USA where bread and butter was, to them, sure a deal as sunrise and sunset. I must admit though, that achieving a meaningful wage was one of my glaring failures. I failed to address this obstacle, however hard I tried. Eventually, I kept getting into trouble with my hungry and angry colleagues who were demanding for a living wage. I will say a little more about my goof on this one later.

Like most faculties in the days of academic malaise, the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine had never innovated a new programme ever since the Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine, (BVM), degree programme was launched in 1970, much of it a transplant from the University of Nairobi. Initially, the BVM was a four-year programme. However, under Professor Katunguka-Rwakishaya, a case was made to add an extra year to the BVM, thus making it a five-year programme. Both Senate and the University Council accepted the change, which made the BVM as long as the MBChB. The rational was to use the fifth year to build field skills and competences. One of the reasons for extending the BVM to a five-year programme was based on the argument that unlike the new medical doctors, who have to do at least a full year of internship after graduation in a recognised hospital under the supervision of a senior doctor, Fresh Veterinary Medicine graduates had no such opportunity for internship training. Once they left the university, they were on their own. Whereas the medical services were still the domain of Government, it had decided to privatisate the veterinary services, so every vet graduate coming out of Makerere went into private practice straight away or joined some non-governmental organisations, with little or no meaningful field exposure. This was the first major transformation that we saw coming out of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine since its inception in 1970, but more innovations were on the way. Since its inception, the faculty had no taught MSc courses. However, it soon began to develop a series of MSc degree programmes, based on coursework and thesis, as well as a Postgraduate Diploma in Wildlife Health and Management. The diploma was introduced when the country’s wildlife heritage had started attracting more and more tourists. It was also to ensure the role of the vets in making sure good disease control programmes were designed and implemented and the national parks, where most of the wild animals lived, were managed on firm and sound scientific principles. It had been realised that the role of a vet had transcended the traditional boundaries of domesticated animals into wildlife as well. The vet’s mandate was expanding rapidly. The Diploma programme was being run under the aegis of the new department, Wildlife and Animal Resource Management (WARM). Here are samples of the new Masters courses that came
on stream in the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine during the last eight years of my stay at Makerere as Vice Chancellor: MSc in Veterinary Medicine (Food, Animal Production and Health); MSc in Veterinary Pathology; Master of Veterinary Preventive Medicine, which had been planned to commence in 2000; Master of Wildlife Health and Management and MSc in Molecular Biology, which I have mentioned earlier. This was in addition to the old thesis-only MSc and PhD in Veterinary Medicine.

The curriculum innovations did not stop at graduate level; new courses were introduced at the undergraduate level. The Bachelor of Biomedical Laboratory Technology was the first in the series. This programme targeted mainly diploma-holding technicians who wanted to upgrade their laboratory skills and techniques. Scores of technicians at Makerere enrolled on the programme and many graduated too. As we shall see later, the graduate technicians posed a challenge for the university. This was a case of bad or no planning at all on our part. Metaphorically speaking, we put the cart before the horse. The Bachelor of Science in Wildlife Health Management was the next in line, followed by the Bachelor of Animal Production Technology and Management (BAPTM). When the proposal to start this degree programme in the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine came to Senate for discussion, the presentation unexpectedly turned into a showdown between Veterinary Medicine and Agriculture. The two faculties had never had a cosy relationship. They were resentful of each other and suspicious of anything that either of them tried to do. Professor Opuda-Asibo's recommendation, in one of his reports to Senate, that the Department of Animal Science be transferred to the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, had angered the agriculturists and made them more resolute to resist all attempts by the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine to encroach on anything they regarded as their professional mandate. According to them, the Department of Animal Science had to stay in the Faculty of Agriculture where it rightly belonged, period. Vets had nothing to do with animal breeding and animal husbandry; that was turf for the agriculturists. Theirs was disease control, animal medicine and meat inspection, pure and simple. It was like the Faculty of Agriculture was telling the Dean of Veterinary Medicine not to venture into fields where vets had zero competence. Battle lines had been drawn between the two Ellys!

When Senate began discussing Professor Katunguka-Rwakishaya's BAPTM proposal, hell virtually broke loose in the house. This time, the volcano blew the cap and erupted into a temporary, but serious burst of anger, spewing some of the animosity that had existed as under-currents between the two faculties for years right into the faces of Makerere academic Senators. I had the unenviable task of chairing Senate that day and feared for the worst. To make matters more difficult for me, I had friends on both sides of the divide. I simply prayed that somehow congeniality and common sense would eventually prevail. As the debate
progressed, I braced myself for sudden walkouts. For the first time under my chairmanship, I expected some Senators to walk out of the meeting in protest, which was a real possibility. Fortunately, my lucky stars held my luck firm that day. No one walked out and no one challenged decisions and recommendations Senate made at the end of the debate. I guess what helped cool the flared tempers was allowing open exchange of views for as long as Senators from both sides of the dispute, as well as others, had something to say for or against the proposal. I had learnt to use this tactic to build consensus and the technique had served me well. The logic was simple, never cut the debate short until everyone has had his or her say. Sooner than later, a point of convergence of opinions is reached where everyone agrees to agree or to disagree. In such tough situations, time ceases to be of essence. The strategy worked and at the end of the day, Senate made good decisions.

The debate was protracted. The Dean of Agriculture, Professor Sabiiti, led the charge, drawing plenty of inspiration from his colleagues who had rallied around him and insisted that the BAPTM in the form it was designed was best suited to his faculty, with the vets servicing some aspects of it. Another proposal was to offer it as an inter-faculty programme. The worst case scenario was to ask the Dean of Veterinary Medicine, Professor Elly Katunguka, to take the document back to the drawing board and have the programme re-cast. The agriculturalists insisted on seeing more originality in the proposal document. Professor Sabiiti was not convinced that vets had not simply lifted ideas from his faculty’s Animal Science curriculum in a copy-and-paste fashion and labelled it as a new programme. Earlier, he had complained that some departments in the university had made it a habit to replicate programmes from other faculties by simply changing course codes and presenting them to Senate as new and original programmes. Of course, this statement did not go down well with Professor Elly Katunguka and his fellow vets in Senate. It also reminded me of what Professor Kayanja, as Chairman of the NARO Board of Directors had once told the NARO research staff, “Do not replicate yesterday’s discoveries and call them today’s breakthroughs”. Apparently, the agriculturists had done their homework well. They had studied and analysed Professor Katunguka’s proposed document thoroughly and had concluded that over 60 percent of the course units in the proposed new programmes were already being taught in the Faculty of Agriculture.

However, the agriculturists had missed the fine details, so most of what they were putting forward as counter arguments for the course to be offered in their department or to be redesigned was technically flawed. As it had now become standard practice for every new programme where the protagonists did not agree, the proposals had to be referred to the Harmonisation Committee of Senate, chaired by the Deputy Vice Chancellor; so, Senate was of the view that the BAPTM proposal document should also be referred to that committee for
arbitration. The agriculturists raised some objections, citing probable bias since the committee chair, Professor Epelu Opio, was from the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine. That was seen as a conflict of interest. Fortunately, Professor Epelu Opio had excused himself from chairing the committee, but not before he had made his views known. That was the first time I saw him take a defensive line in support of his old faculty. He complained about those who were trying to give the vets a raw deal. I was sure Elly Katunguka was enjoying every bit of the moment as Professor Epelu Opio delivered his verbal punches which were seen as a morale boost to his faculty when it needed him most. He even chose to make his remarks while standing, something he rarely did. His strongly worded opinion seemed to have turned the tide in favour of Veterinary Medicine; and the tempo of the debate changed. When the dust settled, all outstanding issues had been amicably resolved. The two Deans were shaking hands again and on talking terms. Both Senate and the University Council approved the new programme. The lesson I drew from this episode was a simple one; we had succeeded in building harmonious working relationships between members of staff of divergent views and opinions. That was what helped us to solve most of our problems as a united community. Those who had been entrusted with leadership as Deans and senior administrators had what it took to be leaders. We had learnt to build consensus on even the most contentious of issues and came up with well cut out decisions, while at the same time minimising the negative fallout of those decisions. It was a debate to remember.

Professor Katunguka-Rwakishaya was quite an achiever. In spite of his heavy responsibilities as Head of Department of Veterinary Medicine, and later as Dean of the faculty, he maintained an active role in research and supervision of PhD students although some of his colleagues kept alleging that he was doing it all at the expense of undergraduate teaching, which they said he never did. However, his publication output attested to his scholarship and also helped him to rise through the ranks fairly fast, becoming a full Professor. During his tour as Dean, his faculty was transformed in many ways. I have a feeling that his pleasant personality also helped him pull off a few hat tricks that contributed to his success as Dean. On the flip side, he also had too many detractors. By the time I was leaving the university, I had begun to see the tell-tale signs which pointed to his loss of popularity amongst his peers. Some accused him of conducting a smear campaign against his so-called opponents but, as it turned out, much was done by other people allegedly acting on his behalf. Nevertheless, they were beginning to impact negatively on him. Whether he was aware of it or not, there was a clique of people who chose to remain faceless but claimed to be his ardent admirers and supporters, who were putting out most of the malicious and disparaging remarks. They had made it a habit to go round, crafting and disseminating insults to people through e-mails, intranet and mobile text messages, making all sorts of allegations about whoever they perceived or considered to be his opponent. They
even seemed to know who went out with whom at Makerere, who suffered from which incurable disease and had even started playing the role of death messengers; predicting when so and so would drop dead. I thought that was unhealthy and unhelpful for him.

Despite his distinguished academic and administrative track record, which spoke volumes for itself, his so-called admirers succeeded in portraying him as a desperate man, which only served as a dent to his remarkable academic reputation. He did not need such admirers or supporters. If anything, this kind of gutter spite undermined the credibility of the individual on whose behalf the admirers meted out the insults and profanity. Moreover, they seemed to have forgotten one important thing: that people take offence to abuse and uncivilised language, especially when such language was used by people who were purportedly “well educated” some of whom included PhD holders. When given a chance, they could hit back in unpredictable ways because no one person had the monopoly of foul language. It was even more painful when what was said about some people was pure fabrication. Without doubt, Elly Katunguka had a lot of potential and credentials to lead a University like Makerere on his own merit but such spiteful people, claiming to speak on his behalf, were simply wrecking his chances.

I have every reason to believe that the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine exemplified the true revival of Makerere as one of the premier universities in Africa. It started out in 1970/71 as a two-department faculty, without a teaching farm. By 2004, it was boasting of eight departments and several other innovative developments. It was also a pleasure to see the long-serving and well-seasoned veterans, such as Professor O. Bwangamoi, return to his old Department of Veterinary Pathology after a long spell of absence. By the time I left the university, he had gone on retirement from Makerere and had joined the new public university in Gulu. As we have seen elsewhere in this account, the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine had so far produced two Vice Chancellors for two of the four new public universities in the country: Dr Penymogi Nyeko for Gulu University in Northern Uganda and Professor Frederick Kayanja for Mbarara University of Science and Technology in Western Uganda. It had also provided Makerere University with two Deputy Vice Chancellors: Professors Frederick Kayanja and Justin Epelu Opio respectively. By 2004, six of the eight departments in the faculty had one or two full Professors each. Most of these new Professors were young men in the prime of their lives. The only woman who had attained that rank in the faculty was Professor Tereza Kibirige Sebunnya, who left Makerere in the late 1980s to join the University of Botswana. However, it was also sad to see the fathers of the faculty, such as Dr Mukibi and Dr Yakobo Bosa, retire from service. Sadly, Dr Bosa did not live long to enjoy his retirement. He died soon after retiring from the university. The best gift he bequeathed to Makerere was his daughter, Dr Jane Bosa, whom I appointed and left acting as the Director of the University Hospital. Once, Professor Justin Epelu Opio told me that he had derived
much of the inspiration to study Veterinary Medicine from Dr Yakobo Bosa, who used to work in Teso District as a Veterinary Officer when the young Epelu Opio was growing up in the ’60s. He said that Dr Bosa’s motorcycle used to impress him so much that he decided that when he grew up, he too would be a vet like him. Little did he know that one day his dream would actually come true and he would be a colleague of the man who had drawn him to the vet profession, and that his chosen career would lead him to better things as well.

Most of the younger men and women who were Assistant Lecturers and Teaching Assistants when I took over as Vice Chancellor in 1993 were, at the time of my departure in 2004, at Senior Lecturer rank and climbing, all in a space of about ten years. That is what I like to call achievement. Although the staffing situation in some departments was not yet optimal, I believe we had laid the foundation on which to build for the future of the faculty. I am sure that sooner than later, the faculty would join hands with other faculties to form a single autonomous college. The faculty celebrated the Silver Jubilee of its return from Nairobi in 1996. It had every reason to celebrate.

Faculty of Medicine – The Bedrock of Uganda’s Health Care, Makerere’s Reputation for Pioneering Research and the Finest that Makerere Offered to the World

If I were ever asked to compile a list of faculties I visited most during my tour as Vice Chancellor at Makerere, the Faculty of Medicine would certainly be topmost on the list. Not that there was something stunningly special that kept me magnetized to Mulago or that it was the most troublesome faculty that I had to manage; the simple reason was because it was the faculty to which I owed my very existence and that of my family. If I were to be honest with myself, I would say I am one of the freaks of modern medicine. Perhaps without it, I would have never survived beyond my infancy; I was always a sickly child, but thanks to my mother who in spite of her lack of formal education had the wisdom to put all her trust in modern medicine, even when the so-called native doctors were advising her to the contrary. I survived to write this story because of her unwavering belief in the men and women in the white overcoats, who have taken care of me all my life. Even as I write this story, I am kept alive by the wonder drugs that modern medicine can offer. I dare say that I also owe my existence to those unrecognised hard working chemists who have kept the pharmaceutical industry churning out new and ever more potent drugs to fight man’s number one enemy, disease. I say I am still alive up to now for the reason that the long years I spent at Makerere as Vice Chancellor took a toll on my life. Something went terribly wrong with my body. It was as if my body had suddenly rebelled against itself. My heart was pumping at a much higher pressure than it was designed for, something I discovered after a trip to Harare with Dr (now Professor) John Ddumba
Sentamu. We had gone there to finalise discussions with the African Capacity Building Foundation on the funding of the new Master of Arts in Economic Policy Management programme; and before long, all my favourite goodies that I used to enjoy, such as confectionary, ice cream and pastries had become potent poison because of the unbalanced sugar metabolism in my body. I had to choose whether to continue consuming them in the quantities I used to and be sure to take on an early retirement from this earth or forego them and live to tell the tale of another day. That was the choice my doctors gave me. Even after I had opted for the latter, I had to keep swallowing pills of all sizes and colours till the day my breath and I would decide to go our separate ways. Since I was not so sure St Peter was really ready to receive me, I figured I had some debts to clear here on earth before I part for the eternal peace; I chose to take my doctors’ advice and quit everything that had to do with sugar. I also reduced my salt intake. It was a hard choice, but I am happy I listened and changed. I did not have to bother St Peter when he was not ready for me. It was a journey I thought I would continue to postpone until the good Lord himself decide otherwise. That was one good reason why I kept remembering the Faculty of Medicine, formerly Makerere Medical School, and going back there every now and then.

The less obvious reason why I kept going back to the Medical School was the HIV/AIDS pandemic that was devastating the university and the country as a whole. Like my mother those many decades ago, I strongly believed that someday in the future, however distant it was at that time, our professors and researchers in the Medical School would provide us with some badly needed answers to the many unanswered questions about this strange and hideous disease, which ingenious Ugandans had dubbed the “slim” long before the medical scientific fraternity had fully understood it. I had known about their efforts in the fight against HIV/AIDS right from the time the disease came to people’s attention in the early 1980s and was quickly given the appropriate name – “slim” – because one of the obvious symptoms of the disease was an unexplained weight loss and body wasting, which led to the slimming effect. Professor George Kirya, a virologist and then the Head of Makerere University’s Microbiology Department and Chairman of the Uganda Medical Association, plus a few of his colleagues in the Faculty of Medicine, had identified it as a new disease and had started talking about it in the Medical Brain Trust programme, which was aired on Uganda Television in the 1980s and moderated by Professor Kirya himself. At that time, most Ugandans were convinced that “slim” had entered Uganda by witchcraft through the Rakai District, one of Uganda’s southern-most districts which shared a border with the United Republic of Tanzania.

We had moved from the point where and when virtually nothing was known about the apparently new and strange disease, how it was transmitted and why people who had contracted it were losing weight so fast, despite the fact that they
were eating well and had good appetite up to the time they died. We even believed that some mosquitoes brought into the country by unscrupulous people were responsible for spreading the disease indiscriminately. Little did we know that mosquito bites had nothing to do with the spread of the disease. We also learnt much later, thanks largely to the efforts of Makerere University Medical researchers and reports from other parts of the world, that AIDS had an extraordinarily long incubation period. People who had the disease would appear normal without any clinical sign of the disease until the virus had had enough sleep in the body and suddenly had woken up and started wreaking havoc on the immune system. That was the time the disease showed it true colours, the worst part being the lingering and agonising slow death. Everyone would know it was the slim disease killing you, but dared not say it aloud. All the partners you had enjoyed live sexual shows with began to think hard about writing their wills, because for them too it was a matter of time, although some would continue to deny that they had it until they too died. In short, we did not fully fathom what had hit the state of our nation’s health but, without a doubt, it had hit us hard.

In those days, death from the slim disease was a shameful death, a true sign of your promiscuity and sexual indiscipline. The cause of your death was there for everyone to see although no one ever said that the person they are about to bury had died of the slim disease. At every burial, it was customary to tell the mourners the cause of death. People had learnt to cover it up nicely. For instance, if the deceased had died coughing, the real cause of death would be described as pneumonia or flu even when everyone knew that it was the slim disease that he or she had died of. It became a taboo to mention the word "slim" at a funeral service. In the Anglican Church, people had stopped sharing the holy cup for fear that the wine could be contaminated with a sick person’s saliva or that the bugs responsible for causing "slim" had stuck to the rims of the chalice. We even feared to shake hands with people suspected to have the disease. About twenty years ago, that was how desperate the situation was in Uganda. We saw what was killing us in the most agonising way we had never experienced before, but we did not know what was killing us, or how to treat or prevent it. The holier-than-thou mentality kept driving it home to us that it was God’s curse for our sinful ways. But what terrible sins had Ugandans committed to deserve such a punishment? Had we not suffered enough under Amin’s tyrannical rule? We had many questions but too few answers and clues about the new killer and how the killer disease spread from human to human, although the initial reports had indicated that it was a disease of gay men in the USA. We were in for a rude shock when we discovered that it was also a disease of the heterosexuals.

The Medical School started to work hard on the problem and soon they were unravelling some of the mysteries and myths surrounding the new disease that appeared to defy any known medication and was sucking people dry to the
bone, making them look like living skeletons and putting the pieces of the most complex medical jig-saw puzzle in modern times together. Makerere University Medical School was back at it, doing what it used to be best known for – good research that led to big breakthroughs in tropical medicine. We shall see more about this story under the Rakai Project.

When I left Makerere for Kyambogo in September 1990, Professor Raphael Owor, that legendary Makerere pathologist and one of the smartest people I had ever met, was Dean of the Faculty of Medicine. I recall one important innovation, which took place in the Medical School during his time as Dean, which stands out vividly in my mind – the community-based medical curriculum introduced in the late 1980s. The idea was for medical students to spend part of their training – during their clinical years – working in the community in the rural areas instead of spending it in the teaching hospital at Mulago. The rationale was that this kind of training would produce better doctors, willing and better equipped to work in a rural setting. The community training would be assessed and the marks earned would contribute to the students’ final grading for the award of the MBChB degree. I remember how he struggled to make the uninformed Senators understand what the new curriculum was all about and how it would be implemented. The School had identified Buyikwe in Mukono District and Kiyeye in Tororo Districts as the possible training centres. The new sites were an addition to Kasangati in the former Mpigi District, now in Wakiso District. Kasangati Health Centre was opened in 1959 after the faculty had realised that the teaching of clinical medicine at Mulago would be incomplete without students being sufficiently exposed to community medicine. Some people have pointed out that the new worldwide concept of Primary Health Care had its beginning at Kasangati. They refer to Maurice King’s book, Medical Care in Developing Countries. The centre had basically three functions; teaching Public Health or Preventive Medicine, as it was known then, to medical students and other allied staff; serving as a research centre in Community Medicine, and providing basic health services to the surrounding communities. It was an excellent facility, only to fall into almost total decay as a result of the ravages of the 1970s.

Professor Owor wanted to take the Kasangati concept a step beyond Public Health. He successfully negotiated and secured a big grant from the International Development and Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada which funded the initial phase of the new programme. I am compelled to point this out because, over the years, I have heard some new universities in Uganda making claims that they pioneered the community-based medical training in Uganda, without due recognition or reference to the real pioneers. This was the first time medical students undertook a big part of their clinical years in the rural communities. From the IDRC grant, Professor Owor bought several bicycles and other inputs students used during their community training. They had to ride those bicycles
for the grand rounds in the villages. Hostels to take care of their accommodation were rented for them at Buyikwe and at Kiyeye in Tororo. By the time I returned to Makerere as Vice Chancellor, the leadership in the Medical School had changed from one pathologist to another. Professor Owor had handed the mantle to Professor Joshua Mugerwa. Both taught in the same department. At the time, both were some of the few professors in the Medical School who had the Doctor of Medicine (MD) degrees. While in other parts of the world, including the University of Dar es Salaam, the MD is the first degree in Medicine and Surgery; at Makerere, it is a serious research advanced degree obtained after the MBChB and the MMed. So, it is in the same league as the PhD, the only difference being that while a PhD student is allocated a supervisor or thesis advisor, the MD student soldiers on alone until he or she is ready to submit the thesis for examination. In the academic jargon, the PhD is regarded as an academic qualification whereas the MD is more of a higher professional qualification in Medicine. At Makerere, few professors had it. Professor Marcelino Andrew Otim, the endocrinologist in the Department of Internal Medicine at the Medical School, was the last to have obtained it during my time at Makerere.

Much of what I would have written about the long and rich history of the Medical School at Makerere was covered by Professor Alexander Odonga. His book, The History of Makerere Medical School, tells it all. I would like to recommend it as a must-read for those who want to know more about how the great Makerere University Medical school came to be, its glorious times and how it survived the brink of collapse during Uganda’s turbulent times. Therefore, I shall not repeat what Professor Odonga has ably articulated. I will only talk about the part that relates to my times as Makerere’s Vice Chancellor. This was also the time Professor Joshua Mugerwa (now deceased) was Dean. Interestingly, late Professor Joshua Mugerwa was the first Dean to host me as Vice Chancellor at Mulago in 1994. At the time, I was doing my familiarisation rounds of the entire university and I had not yet visited the Medical School. He took me around the entire School like he was doing a grand ward round in the hospital. He and his colleagues showed me all there was to see and all I wanted to see, including an old preserved specimen of the heart – in the Pathology Department – of a patient who had died of a heart condition which later became known as the African Heart Disease. As he told me, that type of heart condition had never been observed anywhere else in the world. That was also the first time I saw the rich and interesting collection of specimens kept in the Department of Pathology. What made me sad was the fact that there were no new ones added to the collection. It was during this tour that I learnt the truth about Dr Denis Beckett, the discoverer of the Becketts Lymphoma, a cancer of the jaw that afflicts mainly African children. Professor Mugerwa told me that Dr Beckett was not part of the Makerere staff. He was a consultant with Uganda’s Ministry of Health but he also held the title of Honorary Lecturer in the Medical School, because
all consultants at Mulago participated actively in the teaching of the medical students in their clinical years and examining them, and also in the research projects at the school. Professor Mugerwa also informed me that, besides his work on the lymphoma named after him, Dr Beckett had another peculiar research interest, but apparently with a serious medical purpose related to other types of cancer. He had observed that the quantity of the stool (faeces) an African adult passed out was much more than that of a European. His research interest was to correlate the incidence of colon cancer in both Africans and Europeans and find evidence to support his theory that would explain why the Africans had a lower incidence of colon cancer than the Europeans. He believed that the explanation had to do with the high quantity of fibre in the African diet. The quantity of the stuff the rumen threw out after the food had gone through the alimentary canal was, according to his theory, an indication of a diet rich in fibre. He also believed that the Europeans had a higher incidence of colon cancer because they ate less roughage and therefore passed out much less faeces. He perhaps had good reasons to suspect that there was a link between colon cancer and the quantity of faeces one passed out. However, Professor Mugerwa was unsure whether the theory was ever confirmed.

As we toured the various departments in the school, I began to realise how far the school had decayed over the years of neglect. With very limited resources, our predecessors had pitched all flat roofs with GI sheets. However, as we have seen elsewhere, the rescue came too late. The damage to the buildings was in some cases almost irreversible. Besides the dilapidated buildings, the equipment was also in a sorry state. Much of it was old and had seen better days. But the beauty of it all was to find most old equipment in working condition, thanks to the dedicated technicians who took care of them. I was impressed by the level of care and devotion most departments paid to their old equipment. But also a lot of them were beyond repair. The Department of Physiology caught my attention in a rather special way. The Chief Technician there, Meeya, had special talent for keeping his equipment in tip top condition in spite of their age. He was also a meticulously organised man, which I gave him credit for. As we moved from one department to another, I asked my assistant to record detailed notes about what we had seen and heard. This was the first time that I was touring the entire Medical School which, a few years earlier, had changed its name to the Faculty of Medicine. For convenience, I preferred to refer to the faculty by its old and no longer official name. As we continued with the grand tour of the school, I began to feel a sense of guilt that as a university and as a country, we had let one of the finest medical schools in Africa run down. For many years in the past, this school had been Makerere’s flagship. I could now understand why the World Bank had initially objected to the opening of another medical school. Why start a new one when the old one is still in shambles? When I started thinking about how we could fix the school’s numerous problems, frankly, I did not know where
to begin. A quick mental calculation had shown that we needed a budget in the upward of five billion shillings if we were to restore the Medical School to its former shape. I had no idea where all that money would come from. On a positive note however, which helped me overcome the initial shock, I took a lot of solace from the School’s enduring human resources. That was its greatest asset. In spite of the formidable constraints they had to put up with, fine and patriotic members of staff like Professor Joshua Mugerwa had braved all the storms and continued to train, as best as they could, credible doctors.

On the same tour, I had occasion to visit the place in the Department of Anatomy, where the likes of my namesake, Professor Peter Ssebuwufu, had made their mark. During that visit, I was given a guided tour of the room where cadavers, called the specimens in the trade, were prepared and preserved for the dissections which every first-year medical student had to perform. What a way to introduce students fresh from high school to Medicine. At high school, Biology students dissected frogs but not a human being. I remember, many years ago, some Asian students (particularly females) running away from the Medical School in the first few weeks because they lacked the nerves of steel to cut up a human body to pieces. As I discovered during the tour of the department, the storage area where the cadavers were kept was also in serious need of repairs; the smell of the formalin was unbearable, we had to find a way of venting it out. After Anatomy, my host and his team took us to the Department of Pharmacology and Therapeutics, housed in a building that was constructed in the late 1960s, during the time Professor Karim was conducting his ground breaking research on prostaglandins. By the Medical School standards, it was one of the newest buildings in the Medical complex, but had taken some serious beating from the elements during the days of neglect. Its exterior was as brown as an African termite mound. It was a depressing site. There had been some attempt at some repairs on the building, but it had been shoddy work and had concentrated just on stopping the roof from leaking.

On the western side of the main Pharmacology building were two older small buildings, roofed with red burnt clay tiles. One of them belonged to the Department of Biochemistry, Mulago wing. The other housed the Department of Pharmacy; one of the newest departments in the Faculty of Medicine after Dentistry, having begun in the late ’80s. This new department was hard squeezed for space. Everything it owned was crammed in this tiny building. In terms of resources, the Biochemistry laboratory was relatively better equipped than most departments I had so far visited there.

As I have said, the Medical School tour was intended to be a grand tour, and it had to be if at all I had anything to learn about the school’s teething problems before I could dream up solutions. Everything I saw seemed to be crying out loud as if to say, “please Mr Vice Chancellor, do something about my plight”.
I imagined that every unit I visited was saying, “I used to be a respectable part of this Medical School, but look at me now”. Those were the voices that kept ringing in my ears as we continued with the tour. The Department of Dentistry was still very much stuck in the Mulago Paramedical Schools complex, north of the main Medical School campus. The university had never managed to find an appropriate home for it. Associate Professor Stanley Eccce, who had been teaching at the University of Nairobi, had been persuaded during Obote’s second Administration to come back to Uganda to start the Department of Dentistry at Makerere. Unfortunately, he died rather suddenly, leaving the young department with a leadership vacuum as, besides him, the department had no other member of staff above the rank of Lecturer. Suffice it to mention for now that it was the first of the new departments in the Faculty of Medicine in decades.

The Department of Nursing, another addition to the growing list of new departments in the Medical School, was squeezed in this one Paramedical building too. It was a small, derelict, ugly looking building, in dire need of repairs and a coat of paint. During the European Union (EU) funded rehabilitation of a few Faculties in the early ’90s, the Clinical Research building in the Medical School complex was one of the few buildings that the EU agreed to repair. This building in the main complex housed most of the offices of the clinical Departments of Surgery, Gynaecology, Internal Medicine and others. Incidentally, I had never heard of its existence until we started discussing the rehabilitation work in the late ’80s, shortly before I left for Kyambogo. Some of the research laboratories for these departments were also located there. The building was still in a good shape, but it was beginning to look more like an isolated island in a sea of dilapidation and decay. The Institute of Public Health, the unit closest to the southern end of the Medical School, which is the side facing Kampala and the main entrance to the new Mulago Hospital, was also in a reasonable shape because it was also one of the buildings in the School rehabilitated under the EU grant.

At the time I visited the Department of Pathology, Professor Owor and Associate Professor Wamakota (now deceased) were the only two senior members of staff there. Professor Joshua Mugerwa had left and moved over to the office of the Dean. Besides the rich and interesting collection of specimens I referred to earlier, the department had an impressive collection cards, detailing practically every post-mortem and everything else the generations of members of staff had examined as gross anatomical features on slides under a microscope for almost all the period the department had been in existence.
Plate 1: Faculty of Economics and Management (Formerly Institute of Economics)

Plate 2: Department of Women and Gender Studies
Plate 3: Senate House/Building (Front View)

Plate 4: Senate House/Building (Back View)
Plate 5: Institute of Computer Science (Now Faculty of Computing and Information Technology)

Plate 6: Lincoln House (Refurbished: Front View)
Plate 7: Lincoln House Department of Mass Communication/Makerere University FM Radio Studios (Electronic Media Training Facility) in the Refurbished Lincoln House

Plate 8: Main Building (Refurbished: View from the Freedom Square with Students in the Foreground)
Plate 9: Department of Food Science and Technology (Front View)

Plate 10: Food Science and Technology with Conference Centre (View from South)
Plate 11: Faculty of Technology Incubation Centre (with some of the Sprawling Private Students’ Hostels in the Background)

Plate 12: Faculty of Forestry and Nature Conservation
Plate 13: New University Main Library Extension

Plate 14: The Refurbished St Augustine Chapel
Plate 15: St Augustine Students' Centre

Plate 16: Faculty of Law (New Building)
Plate 17: Faculty of Law, Human Rights and Peace Centre

Plate 18: HYPERLINK “mailto:-%20I@mak.com%20” – I@mak.com Resource Centre
Plate 19: Faculty of Social Sciences – Community Based Rehabilitation Extension (Left), Old building (Right)

Plate 20: St Francis Students’ Centre
I was impressed by the department’s capacity to keep records. On another occasion while I was there, the teaching Hospital sent a specimen which was the size of a full-grown pumpkin, possibly weighing up to five kilogrammes or more, wrapped in a polythene bag. It had come from the operating theatre where the surgeons had removed it from a patient. I remember my nephew, Dr Martin Musisi Kalyemenya, who at the time was MMed Pathology student, telling me that all the mass I was looking at was once a kidney. Only a tiny portion of the healthy kidney was left on top of this huge mass, the rest was just some sort of a tumour. It transpired that the patient came from the rural area and the witch doctors there had convinced him that the growing swelling in the abdomen was due to a spell someone had cast on him and kept assuring him that he would be alright, because they had the means to cure him. Unfortunately, they failed. It was when his relatives realised the gravity of his condition that they decided to seek help from the doctors at Mulago.

Next door to the Department of Pathology is the Department of Microbiology. After the departure of Professor George Kirya, things had never been the same for this department. When I visited, late Dr Baingana, then a Senior Lecturer was the departmental head, as there were no senior people above him at the time. In fact, he had just a skeleton of staff, most of them at the level of Assistant Lecturer. When I inquired why the department was so poorly staffed, he gave me a very revealing answer. Young doctors were not interested in non-clinical disciplines where it was hard to make money, so only few of them were keen to take up teaching positions in what was broadly termed the biomedical departments, which include Anatomy, Physiology, Microbiology and Biochemistry. It had therefore become increasingly difficult to attract new staff to these disciplines. Makerere’s low pay and the insistence of the Appointments Board on a good academic transcript of at least B+ standing, without retakes or repeated years, made it even much harder. I suspected that one of the factors that contributed to the low grades from the medical school was lack of access to adequate textbooks. Deprived of the facilities necessary for a favourable learning environment, even the brightest of students could only perform marginally. In spite of the fact that every year, the Medical School admitted the best students in the Uganda Advanced Level Certificate Examinations (UACE) countrywide, majority of students failed a paper or two during their five years of study at the Medical School. This in turn reduced the size of the pool from which departments in the Medical could pick potential members of staff. Many applied, but the Board would not appoint them because they did not meet the minimum requirements for appointment as Assistant Lecturers or Teaching Assistants. This was one of Dr Baingana’s problems, which took us a bit of time to solve. As we toured the various parts of the Microbiology Department, we went to a section which Dr Baingana warned us was unsafe and dangerous for people with a compromised immune system to enter. I believe the section contained colonies of deadly microbes like those that cause tuberculosis, but of course securely locked
away. I knew none of the members of my entourage had taken an HIV test but, all the same, we all entered the room. At that time, we assumed that only people who were HIV seropositive had compromised immune systems. Again, like most of the departments we had visited before, Microbiology was no exception. It lacked modern equipment. Most of the equipment was old and out of order, largely for lack of spare parts and good technicians to repair them.

For several years, I had heard of the Department of Medical Illustration, but my knowledge of the department up until I visited the Medical School was simply that of people whose main job was to assist departments like Anatomy sketch the anatomical features of a human body. However, as a result of my visit there, I was pleasantly surprised to discover that medical illustration involved a lot more than just drawings of human anatomical features. In fact, if Professor Mugerwa had not arranged a visit to the department for me, it was probable that it would not have featured on the itinerary and I would not have been as enthusiastic about the department’s new programmes we had to approve later in Senate and at Council.

Indeed, the tour educated me about many things in the Medical School which, at that time, I either did not know or had just vague knowledge of. The Medical Illustration Department was certainly one of them. For instance, I did not know that they made three-dimensional casts of normal and abnormal human structures to augment the students’ learning experience, and that the department was also responsible for making high quality illustrations for medical textbooks and journals, among other things. I found it an exciting discovery. I am quite certain that every student who has passed through the Medical School is familiar with the face of the soft spoken Serumaga, a fine artist who specialised in Medical Illustration in Britain way back then when most of the teaching staff at the Medical School were expatriates. When the last expatriate there left the department in the early ’70s, Serumaga took over as head and had been there ever since. In fact, people had started referring to the Department of Medical Illustration as Serumaga’s department. I am sure most people at Makerere might not have known the owner of the handwriting that appears on many old Makerere certificates, including mine, issued before the ICT era. If you received any academic certificate from Makerere University prior to 1993, chances were that Serumaga wrote your name and degree class on it. Because of his good and stylish handwriting, he had been contracted to write the names on all academic documents of the university, except the academic transcripts. It was a job he excelled at. Unfortunately, the computers edged him out of business. For the first time during my visit there, I had a deeper understanding of what this rather obscure department was doing. In spite of the advances in computer graphics and design, we agreed that the department was still relevant. All that was needed was to modernise it. However, given the limited resources, that would not be easy.
The Institute of Public Health (IPH) at the Medical School started out as a Department of Preventive Medicine, one of the teaching departments for the MBChB Degree. Forensic Medicine also used to be taught there. This was the Department where Professor Josephine Nambooze, the first female in East Africa to graduate as a doctor from Makerere University and the first female Professor of Medicine at Makerere University, as well as late Professor Joseph Lutwama etched out their professional careers. Besides participating in the undergraduate teaching, the institute was offering a postgraduate Diploma in Preventive Medicine, which later changed to a postgraduate Diploma in Public Health. The name also changed from Department of Preventive Medicine to the Institute of Public Health within the Faculty of Medicine. In fact, the institute was basically created as a service unit for the MBChB programme. However, in the early 1980s, the institute started to design its own graduate degree programme. The first in line was the Master of Medicine in Public Health, MMed Public Health. Dr Kyabaggu, now a senior official with the Ministry of Health and a contemporary of mine during our undergraduate days, was one of the pioneer students on the MMed Public Health programme. When we were undergraduates, I used to share a beer with him and the late Dr Joachim Kibirige every now and then. Paris Bar on the Wandegeya-Mulago Road, now called Haji Kasule Road from Wandegeya to Mulago was our watering hole. Dr Kibirige went on to become the Medical Superintendent of Masaka Hospital and died during the Museveni take-over of Kampala in January 1986. Shortly before I returned to Makerere as Vice Chancellor in 1993, the future Vice President of Uganda, Dr Gilbert Bukenya, had also come back from Papua New Guinea where he had taken refuge during Uganda’s turbulent time and joined the institute as a member of staff. He was one of the few members of staff of the institute, if not the only one, with a PhD in the field of Public Health at the time.

A few years later, Dr Fred Wabwire Mangeni, a PhD graduate of Johns Hopkins University’s School of Public Health in Baltimore, USA, joined him. At the time of my first visit to the Medical School, Dr Bukenya was the Director of the Institute. He was a man who seemed to have fallen madly in love with his research. At the time, he had several ongoing research programmes. He also had the knack for writing highly-selling funding proposals to donors, and was therefore able to raise funds for his research projects. Besides HIV/AIDS and Malaria research, he devoted a great deal of his energy to studying the incidence of Bilharzia, a debilitating tropical disease transmitted by certain species of water snails. He did much of this research in the paddy rice growing areas of Eastern Uganda. In fact, he was a prolific researcher and, as was to be expected, research dollars kept rolling in too. However, the same research dollars almost cost him his appointment as the Vice President of Uganda during the confirmation hearings in Parliament.
By 1994 when I first visited the institute, there were no obvious signs that the man had political ambitions, or that one day he would become Uganda's Vice President. In fact, for the period I was with him, I do not recall ever hearing him talk politics until the general election of 2001. When he finally told me he was going to stand as a candidate for the Parliamentary elections, I could hardly believe him. It came to me as a surprise, not so much because I had not heard about it from the grapevine – after all a Vice Chancellor's ears are ever on the ground and in the process you kept picking up lots of bits and pieces of information – but because he lacked the tell-tale signs of a charismatic and flamboyant politician. To me, Dr Bukenya came across as a typical academic and not the kind of politician we were used to, but deep down the gentle and genial man was someone determined to make his mark in the mucky world of politics.

Even before I embarked on my grand tour of the Medical School and the Teaching Hospital, I had been a regular visitor at Mulago. I went there not so much as a patient, but to visit sick members of my family, relatives and the many friends who were hospitalised there from time to time. In fact, I owe Mulago Hospital a debt of gratitude. Three of my four children were born there under the expert hand of Dr Florence Mirembe, one of the few women members of staff in the Medical School to have risen to the rank of Associate Professor during my time and, further still, one of the very few members of staff who, in addition to the MMed, had a PhD degree in Reproductive Physiology. She was one of the best gynaecologists Makerere and Uganda had. Ever since the Medical School was established on Mulago Hill, Mulago Hospital has been its main teaching hospital. The relationship between the institutions occupying the same hill was a symbiotic one, which had existed ever since the two institutions moved there; the hospital being the first, joined later by the young Medical School in 1923. Makerere staff provided the specialist medical care to patients and the hospital in turn provided space and facilities for training medical students. The relationship worked beautifully. However, as we shall see shortly, I was to be rudely reminded that time had come to change the way this historical relationship between Makerere University and Mulago Hospital worked. Under the new arrangements, Makerere University would have to pay for using the hospital as a teaching facility or look for an alternative teaching hospital.

As a long serving Vice Chancellor, I had become accustomed to hearing crazy ideas but this was one of the craziest I had ever heard. I thought the idea was crazy because Mulago Hospital was making extensive use of the expertise of our professors and lecturers. Secondly, Makerere's Faculty of Medicine was at the time the main training institution for all doctors who run Mulago and other hospitals in the country, from the most junior house officers to the most senior consultants. For years, all including the Mulago Hospital top brass, had trained in the same teaching hospital. We will hear more about this baffling proposal later. For now, let us return to my grand tour of the Medical School and Mulago Hospital.
After I had seen the Medical School, I was anxious to visit the teaching hospital. Mulago Hospital is two hospitals in one, the new complex, which the Duke of Kent opened in October 1962 as part of Uganda’s independence celebrations, and the much older one occupying the northern side of Mulago Hill. The latter was a transfer from Mengo, south west of Makerere. Professor Odonga has given a detailed account of the beginnings of Mulago Hospital, as a venereal disease treatment centre, in his book The History of the Medical School. For many years, the old Mulago Hospital doubled as Makerere’s teaching hospital, and most of the early medical research breakthroughs at the Medical School came out of its humble colonial tin roofed buildings. Since 1962, most of the undergraduate and postgraduate teaching and research took place in the new hospital building complex. The new Mulago Hospital is a giant six-floor building, and practically every clinical department is located in that single building, except Psychiatry and Orthopaedic Surgery, which are housed in the old Mulago complex. In my unprofessional opinion, I believe that the new hospital building was carefully designed, with convenience and functionality in mind. The offices of the hospital administration are located on the fourth floor, which also houses the Department of Internal Medicine and most of the medical wards. When I visited the Hospital for the first time as Vice Chancellor in 1994, Dr Lawrence Kaggwa had been appointed Director of Mulago Hospital complex a year or so earlier. Dr Kaggwa, a Makerere-trained surgeon, is an old friend of mine. We were at Makerere together during our undergraduate days. As we have seen elsewhere in this account, Dr Kaggwa was one of the few medical students to break the myth that, for a medical student to be able to perform well, he or she had to be resident in the university halls of residence. For all the years Lawrence Kaggwa was an undergraduate medical student at Makerere, he never lived in any hall of residence on the university campus. He was a non-resident student for all the five years he was in the Medical School and, in spite of this, he passed all examinations without difficulty. So, when the University Council decided to close down Northcote Hall for a year, the medical students resident there protested. All we did was to tell them about Dr Lawrence Kaggwa, the medical student who excelled without having spent a single night on a university bed in a hall of residence.

Professor Joshua Mugerwa was with me on my first tour of the teaching hospital. Dr Kaggwa was delighted to see his old friend now in charge of the university and, indeed, the tour of the hospital began and ended well. Dr Kaggwa took us on a guided tour of the entire hospital complex, including the new one. Unfortunately, he had to leave us half way through the tour because he had to perform a surgery. As he was taking leave of us, he made a joke, saying that if a surgeon did not practise for a day, his hands and fingers would get stiff, which meant that he would not be able to operate again. He did not want to end up a disabled surgeon, so we had to let him go. Even in the midst of a heavy administrative schedule, he still found time to perform one or two operations now
and then. Fortunately, he left us in the safe hands of his deputy, Dr Kikampihaho, also a surgeon. At the time of visit, the entire Mulago Hospital complex was undergoing massive rehabilitation, with funding from the Government of Spain. Before he handed over to his deputy to continue with the tour, Dr Kaggwa took us through the entire rehabilitation programme and some of the alterations they had proposed to make to the existing buildings. A Spanish construction company by the name Dragodas, which had earlier rehabilitated Entebbe International Airport under the same grant and one or two other projects, had been contracted for the civil works. It was gratifying to see the old buildings being given a facelift. Despite being a regular visitor there, I had never been inside any of the new Mulago’s operating theatres, let alone know how many they were. It was on this tour that I discovered that the new hospital had several operating theatres. One is attached to Casualty Department on the third floor, with another on the fifth floor for the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology. These are specialised theatres. The general operating theatres, some sixteen of them, are located on the ground floor, referred to as Ward One. According to Dr Kaggwa, a lot of planning had gone into the rehabilitation of the general operating theatres. At his suggestion, a special room where medical students clerking in surgery would sit and watch, live on closed circuit screen monitors, senior surgeons perform complicated operations was being incorporated as one of the new facilities in the non-sterile part of the general operating theatre complex on the ground floor of the building. The operations would also be recorded on video tape for future playback. Dr Kaggwa impressed me as a man with vision, and possibly someone who was thinking ahead of his time. His idea of the watch-and-learn facility really impressed me. Unfortunately, many of his ideas were never realised, because the grant the Spanish Government had made available to Uganda Government for the rehabilitation of the hospital was small in comparison with the scope of the rehabilitation that had to be done. After years of neglect, there was too much decay to take care of and that included old Mulago Hospital which, in a way, had been left to die after the new hospital complex opened.

To ease the pressure on what was then the only referral hospital in the country, Kaggwa and his colleagues had come up with the idea of an Assessment Centre. Patients referred to Mulago Hospital would first report to the frontline doctors in the Centre, who would carry out the preliminary examination and decide where, within the entire Mulago Hospital complex, to send them. The idea was to save time and make the process of receiving treatment at Mulago more efficient. To my delight, our medical students would also participate in the Assessment Centre’s activities. On a sad note, the Government decided not to include the Medical School in this massive rehabilitation programme because, according to the bureaucrats, the Medical School was not under the Ministry of Health but under Education and Sports. Only the teaching hospital was under the Ministry of Health. The Spanish Government gave the grant to the Ministry
of Health, and not to Education and Sports, so the argument went. That was how Government machinery worked. It is perhaps important to note that besides the wards and the hospital administration offices, most of the Medical School’s clinical departments also had offices, side laboratories and teaching rooms in the new Mulago Hospital building. It was really difficult to tell where what belonged to Makerere University ended and where what belonged to Mulago, as a department within the Ministry of Health, began. After many years of working together, the Medical School and the Mulago Hospital had become more or less one institution. This was one of the reasons which led me to believe that those who were advocating the separation of the two institutions were simply out of touch with this historical reality. In spite of our protests, by the time I stepped down in June 2004, the newly inaugurated Governing Board of Mulago Hospital complex was still pursuing the idea of separating the two institutions and asking Makerere University to pay for using Mulago Hospital as a teaching hospital. At the time, Government had decided to upgrade Mulago Hospital complex to a parastatal status with its own Board, and the role of the Ministry of Health in the hospital had changed to supervisory.

I had heard about the existence of a hospital mortuary but, until then, I had no idea where it was located. The one I was more familiar with was just outside of the new hospital; a lonely little red brick house separated from the main hospital building by a road, which belonged to the Ugandan Police. The one that belonged to the Ministry of Health is housed within the hospital building, with the exit overlooking the Police morgue outside. Professor Mugerwa, being a pathologist, made sure that my tour of the new Mulago hospital did not end without seeing his work place – the hospital mortuary – where the pathologists performed post-mortems. I had never set foot in this place before and I was scared of what I would find. Fortunately, the bodies were not left out in the open, except those due for post-mortem or those being collected by their families. What hits your nose as you enter the facility is the strong smell of formalin. I was pleasantly surprised to find the place clean and well looked after. Professor Mugerwa was quick to point out that although the hospital administration does all it takes to keep the place immaculately clean, pathologists have to learn to live with stench from decomposed bodies. It was the unpleasant side of their job which they have to endure all their working life. He told me that there was a time during the difficult days when the morgue fridges had broken down when the stench was unbearable. He said that if the situation was still as bad as it was then, he would not have included a visit there on my itinerary.

I remember teasing Professor Mugerwa by reminding him that it was often said that a pathologist was a physician who made the right diagnosis twenty-four hours too late. After the visit to the morgue, I was given a tour of a few wards where I met Makerere staff and students doing their rounds. It was a
wonderful sight to see them in their neat white overcoats, attending to all sorts of patients. Mulago, being a free Government hospital, everyone who fell sick and was unable to pay for private medical care went there; so some of the wards were understandably crowded. I could not help wondering how little Ugandans, and particularly Makerere’s critics, appreciated the tremendous contribution the Medical School made to the nation’s health care system.

I followed up my grand tour of the Medical School and the teaching hospital with a series of meetings with staff. I wanted to share with them what I had seen on my tour of the school, to sound out their views on those problems which affected their ability to teach efficiently and effectively, and how they thought we could solve the problems. It was also an occasion for me to get to know those I did not know then or had not yet met. I knew most of the senior members of staff by name, but I had not met most of the younger staff. The first meeting was held in the Davis Lecture Theatre, the largest in the Medical School and named after the famous pathologist J. N. P. Davis, who worked at Mulago for many years before independence. I had never been inside the lecture theatre before, but when Professor Mugerwa ushered me in, my heart immediately sank. What I saw shocked me. The famous Davis Lecture Theatre was in an unbelievably sorry state.

Originally, the building was flat roofed. Before it was given a pitched roof in the 1980s, it had badly leaked, which had made the ceiling and the walls look awfully ugly and unsightly. Everything inside this once magnificent lecture theatre looked old and outdated. The place had seen better days but years of neglect had reduced it to that pathetic state. I could not help feeling sorry for the first-year students who came from well maintained secondary schools like Gayaza, Namagunga and many others, coming to Makerere’s famous Medical School and having their first lecture in a theatre that had last seen a coat of paint some thirty years ago. I wondered what their first impressions of the Medical School they had worked so hard for were. Certainly for me, it was an anti-climax to my otherwise interesting tour of the Medical School and Teaching Hospital. After recovering from the shock, we settled down to business. Nearly every member of staff attended the meeting. Although the problems were many and we talked about them candidly; as far as members of staff were concerned, poor salaries were the overriding issue.

Unfortunately, as a new Vice Chancellor, I was not able to do anything immediate to ameliorate their situation. I had no other sources of money except the grossly inadequate Government subvention. At the time, the minimum annual university budget was USh70 billion, equivalent to about US$ 70 million at that time. The Government could only provide about UgSh 25 billion, the equivalent of US$24 million, much less than a half of the university budget. It was, therefore, impossible to promise quick fixes. As we shall see later, I felt angry
and bitter at the pittance we were getting from the Treasury and for the Ministry of Finance’s failure to understand the plight of the university when in fact the majority of the economists working in the Ministry of Finance were Makerere graduates. I expected them to be more sympathetic to their alma mater. Poor salaries were making it that much harder to recruit and retain good staff, not only in the Medical School, but across the entire university.

I was also acutely aware that poor remuneration was part of the reason for the staff shortages in most departments in the Medical School. Our young doctors were leaving the country in large numbers for greener pastures in the Middle East and the Bantustans in South Africa. In the 1970s, the UK was the main destination of most of the doctors, who were fleeing Idi Amin’s Uganda. Now, they were going elsewhere where they could earn reasonable salaries that could sustain them and their families. The Medical School staff expected the new Vice Chancellor and his team to do something about this unbearable situation. Unfortunately, that had to wait for a long time. We also discussed other matters relating to the Medical School in general. After the visit to Mulago, it was time to plan the necessary interventions and to translate our plans into concrete actions. We decided to start the process by identifying the priority areas and possible funding sources. As we have seen, during the EU-funded rehabilitation of the School, only a few buildings were renovated, the rest were still in a dire state of disrepair. As we began to mobilise funds to start on the rehabilitation, the new and old Mulago Hospital buildings were taking on a completely new look. The rusty brown iron sheets, which covered the roofs of most of the buildings in the old Mulago complex, had given way to the sky blue IT4 coated sheets and the dirty brown walls had been white washed. This had suddenly made the old buildings look like they were brand new ones. The Medical School was now the ugly sore in the entire Mulago complex. This made me envious of my friend Lawrence Kaggwa, at the same time angry with the Government bureaucrats, who had left the Medical School out of the Spanish-funded rehabilitation of the hospitals. It was a challenge which, in the end, inspired us to look for the money for rehabilitating our own Medical School buildings. I was already aware that it would be next to impossible to persuade any donor to give us the kind of money we needed to complete the rehabilitation of the School. In fact, most donors had long stopped funding infrastructure, so we had to look elsewhere. It struck me as a good idea to invite the three Government Ministers concerned – Amanya Mushega of Education, James Makumbi of Health and Joash Mayanja Nkangi of Finance – to see for themselves the pathetic state the Medical School was in. Somehow, the trick worked except for Mr Mayanja Nkangi, the Minister for Finance, whom we needed the most. His two colleagues accepted our invitation and came. Mr Mayanja Nkangi did not reply to our invitation. Even after we had sent several reminders to his office, he did not show up. Perhaps he declined our invitation because he was not prepared to promise what he could not deliver.
Amanya Mushega and James Makumbi saw the sorry state the school was in. They showed a lot of sympathy, but they were not the Minister in charge of the Government purse. All they promised was to take up the matter with the Ministry of Finance on our behalf. As far as I was concerned, that was a dead end. However, all was not lost. By 1994/95, the Treasury was still giving us some money for capital development. To me, that was a good beginning. We would use part of that money to rehabilitate the Medical School, while we looked around for more funding.

After doing some back-of-the-envelope calculations, we submitted our ideas to the Estates and Works Committee of the Council and obtained permission to commission Technology Consult (TECO) to undertake an evaluation of the scope of work and prepare the Bills of Quantities. As usual, TECO quickly came back with a comprehensive report and the estimated cost of all the works – civil, mechanical and electrical. I believe the figure was about or close to UgSh3 billion, about US$3 million at the time. Although it was much less than the UgSh5 billion we had estimated during the tour, it was still a lot of money to raise in a lump sum, and using only the money in the capital development budget would have taken ages to complete the job. I had the opportunity to discuss the Medical School rehabilitation programme with a team of Japanese who had visited Uganda on behalf of JICA, to explore the possibility of funding and equipping the Faculty of Medicine. They promised to give our request some thought, but after visiting the School, they came to the conclusion that they would not be able to fund the rehabilitation since most of the buildings were in a bad state of disrepair. They would not provide equipment either, because the School did not have any suitable buildings for them. They told me that they would only consider equipping the teaching hospital and the clinical departments. I was disappointed, but undeterred and not about to quit. Although TECO had given us a rather intimidating bill, I was not overly scared. I was convinced that, as long as Government continued to give us some money for capital development, regardless of how little it was, we could do something for the Medical School. It would not be possible to undertake all the rehabilitation work at once; we would have to do it in phases. Tony Kerali, who was then acting as the University Engineer, came in handy. He provided us with a workable plan and way forward. We were now ready to throw the die. We presented our proposals to the Estates and Works Committee of Council. The Committee, under the chair of the then Mrs, but now Lady Justice Mary Maitum, accepted our proposals but advised that we should start with the Departments of Anatomy and Physiology. We called for tenders and a contractor was identified. Unfortunately, he turned out to be an incompetent contractor and we were forced to terminate the contract prematurely. This reminded me of a remark one of the Apollo Space Programme Astronauts made when he was asked how he felt about going back to space after the Apollo 1 caught fire on the launch pad and how safe his space ship was. His answer was straight and revealing. He
said that as long as the contract to build it had gone to the lowest bidder; he could not help being worried about the soundness of his spacecraft. North American Corporation, the builder of the command module of the Apollo 1 spacecraft that caught fire on the launch pad and killed all the three astronauts on board took some of the blame for the accident. I believe North American Corporation won the contract to build the space capsule, because it submitted the lowest bid. That was what happened to us too. We had taken the lowest bidder. What followed when the contractor started work was nothing short of a disaster. The extraction fans he installed in the specimen (cadaver) store in the Department of Anatomy failed to work. There were also several other things that were not going well. The consultants advised that in order to save the precious little project money, it was better to terminate the contract and re-tender the job. A new contractor was hired and, eventually, the rehabilitation of both the Anatomy and Physiology Departments was completed to our satisfaction. However, I was deeply disturbed and disappointed when, one day, I went to look at the recently rehabilitated Physiology laboratory and found dirty foot marks imprinted all over the front of the building which had just been repainted. That hurt me deeply. I regretted and cursed our lack of appreciation for beautiful things and what appeared to be our inborn trait of the “I do not care” attitude to all things public. If I had not remembered in time that the good African culture does not permit use of foul language and swearing in public, I had prepared a mental list of four-letter words I was about to utter as I vented my anger at whoever cared to listen. However, the ethical Africanness in me had the better of me and I restrained myself. I believe I had every reason to be angry. The rehabilitation had cost millions of UgShs and the walls were soiled in no time, how inconsiderate!

As long as the Treasury released money, the University Secretary, Avitus Tebarimbasa, was making good on his promises, paying the contractors promptly — at least by Makerere standards. Sam Byanagwa, the Deputy Secretary in charge of the Project Implementation Office and Tony Kerali, the acting University Engineer, as well as TECO the consultants were doing a fine job and we were not experiencing terribly long delays in settling contractor’s interim certificates. Mr Nabongo, the Desk Officer at the Ministry of Finance responsible for our capital development budget, was also delivering on his obligations. Money from the Treasury was coming in fairly timely. Mr Nabongo was a useful member of Mrs Maitumu’s Estates and Works Committee and attending the meetings regularly. After Anatomy and Physiology, we had planned to move on to the Department of Psychiatry building, before tackling the Davis Lecture Theatre and other departments in the Medical School complex. But just as we thought we were making progress, in 1997, the Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development, now under a new Minister, Mr Gerald Sendaula, decided to stop funding capital development projects at Makerere. So, we were back to square one.
Some officials in the Ministry of Finance had convinced the new Minister that Makerere was now making plenty of money from the private students’ scheme and under-declaring it. Therefore, there was no reason why Treasury should continue giving a lot of money to the university. It always pained me to see highly educated people making critical decisions based on hearsay or un-researched information. If they believed that we were under-declaring our private income, I wondered what stopped them from coming to Makerere to check our accounts and books to confirm their claims before confusing everyone in the Ministry, including the Minister. On the contrary, all the income the university earned every year was declared in full in the books of accounts and in every financial statement we filed to the Ministry of Finance and Parliament. Interestingly, the Auditor General of Uganda kept a full-time team of Auditors at Makerere to oversee our day-to-day financial transactions and audited our books annually without fail, and had never indicated in any of his reports that the university had under-declared any revenues. I remember a colleague who used to refer to people who made serious decisions based on hearsay or who never bothered to research their information as part-time thinkers. Was this a case of part-time thinking? Whatever it was, it marked the end of the capital development budget, except for a few items which the Government was under obligation to continue funding, such as counterpart funding for donor-supported projects. The Ministry of Finance’s decision to cut off capital funding was a devastating blow, and our efforts at rehabilitating the Medical School virtually ended there. Fortunately, I had not promised and although the rehabilitation of Anatomy and Physiology had proceeded smoothly, it presented us with some challenges. The contractor had requested that we close the buildings during the rehabilitation, which we found rather difficult to do because, by closing the two departments, we would be disrupting teaching. Somehow, he had to work alongside on-going teaching. Inevitably, that slowed down work.

While all this was happening, Professor Mugerwa’s term as Dean expired and in 1995, he stepped down. It was time for the School to elect a new Dean. Dr Gilbert B. Bukenya emerged as the candidate of choice. The deanship had moved from Pathology to Public Health. I believe by this time Dr Bukenya had risen to the rank of Associate Professor. Professor William Annakkabong’s term as Associate Dean also came to an end about the same time. He was formerly the Head of Pharmacology and Therapeutics. This time, staff elected Dr Nelson Sewankambo, a physician from the Department of Internal Medicine as Associate Dean. Interestingly, Bukenya and Sewankambo were classmates during their undergraduate days at Medical School, from 1971 to 1976. Bukenya came to the Medical school from St Mary’s College, Kisubi and Sewanambo from Namilyango College: two famous Catholic Schools in Uganda, but with totally different value systems. In fact, some people wondered whether the chemistry that existed between the two during their student days was still there to make them work
together. Just about the same time when they were settling in their jobs, tragedy struck. On the morning of March 11, 1996, armed thugs shot dead Professor Rodney Belcher, one of the American volunteers teaching at the Medical School at that time. He was also the Head of the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery. They waylaid him in the compound of his department and shot him dead as he parked his car. After killing him, the thugs sped off with his four-wheel drive car. The car was never seen again and the culprits were never caught. It was the news I was least prepared for that day. Professor Belcher’s cold blood murder in broad daylight sent shock waves throughout the Medical School and the university. Dazed by the shocking news, it took me time to figure out how I would present myself to his widow or what I would say at his requiem. I did not even know how I would break the news to Dr David Matovu, the Chairman of the University Council. There were days when I really hated my job and this was one of them. The murder of Professor Belcher by an assassin’s bullet in the midst of a busy old Mulago Hospital and for just a car was hard to comprehend. It was a tragic and senseless act, but senseless acts had become all too common in Uganda. I saw our country slipping back into the dark ages, when criminals reigned supreme.

Rodney Belcher, a graduate of the Miami Miller School of Medicine in Florida, was not a stranger to Uganda. He first came to Makerere as a Fulbright scholar in 1983, but was forced to relocate to Dar es Salaam, because of Uganda’s political chaos at the time. He returned to Makerere in 1986 and was appointed Professor and Head of the Orthopaedic Department. He had managed to reinstate the making of the orthotics and prosthetics for people injured in the war and those stricken by polio, a programme which had started at Mulago during Professor Huckstep’s time in the late ’60s. I could vividly recall how he had struggled to get the Master of Medicine in Orthopaedic Surgery through the Faculty Board and Senate. It had been a hard fight. My friend Professor Kayanja had been calling from Mbarara almost every day, inquiring why we had delayed the launch of the programme, because he wanted his son, Mark Kayanja to register for it. When the Council had finally approved his programme, Dr Mark Kayanja was one of the first students. Now in a wink of an eye, the expert was gone. It was a bad and sad day for the university, an experience we found hard to quickly recover from. However, in the midst of the chaos and confusion, his wife amazingly managed to keep her calm composure. I really admired her courage because, after overcoming the initial shock, she quickly pulled herself together and told us that her wish was that her husband would be buried in Uganda in the grounds of the Bahai Temple at Kikaaya, in accordance with the Bahai faith rituals. Kikaaya Hill on which the magnificent domed temple is built is about three kilometres north of Mulago. The American Embassy and American community in Uganda were magnanimous too. They took care of the funeral arrangements. Professor Belcher’s funeral was my first experience to participate in the Bahai burial rituals. The requiem ceremony was simple and was over in just a few minutes. Prayers
and chants were said for the soul of the deceased in the magnificent and imposing temple, before the body was laid to rest in the cemetery, a few metres away on the eastern side of the temple. In his honour, his colleagues at Mulago suggested that the department should be named, Rodney Belcher Department of Orthopaedics. I am not sure the name was officially approved.

In the interim, Dr Bukenya had settled down well in his new job as Dean and the Medical School was once again buzzing with a foray of research projects. The work on HIV/AIDS and TB, in collaboration with the Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) in Cleveland Ohio, USA, was progressing well. I had been invited to open a new laboratory furnished with latest equipment such as ELISA machines, the polymerase chain reaction, PCR machine and cryogenic containers, for keeping specimens frozen. The PCR machine was an important piece of equipment and central to the work of the laboratory. The PCR machine was used to replicate millions of copies of any DNA or RNA, including that of the HIV, which causes AIDS in humans. Much of this work was being funded by the Forgarty Foundation through the National Institutes of Health in the USA. It was more than a pleasure to see the quantity and quality of research which my colleagues like Professor Francis Miïro and Professor C. M. Ndugwa had accomplished in the HIV/AIDS research. As we have seen elsewhere, the CWRU-Makerere collaboration started in a humble way in 1986 with the first visit of Professor Fredrick Chapman Robbins of the Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland Ohio and the 1954 Nobel Prize winner for his co-discovery of the Polio vaccine, and had grown steadily. As a result, several departments in the Medical School, as well as staff of the Ministry of Health at Mulago were now participating in the research projects. Professor Miïro’s group was focusing on the mother-to-child transmission of the virus, and breakthroughs out of this work were imminent.

In spite of the constant call on his time, and being Dean at Makerere, a job which required one to attend several meetings almost on a daily basis and to travel outside the country, Dr Bukenya remained an active researcher. He was publishing his research results and accumulating papers. I believe it was in 1995 when he applied for promotion to full Professor of Medicine. His application went through the process and the assessors recommended that he merited the rank of Professor at Makerere University. The Appointments Board at Makerere made its recommendation to the Minister of Education to promote him to full Professor, which the Minister did. However, 1996 was the year of the first presidential and general election in Uganda. Several members of staff applied for leave to participate as parliamentary candidates. To my surprise, the Dean of Medicine, now Professor Gilbert Bukenya, was one of them.

When Professor Bukenya finally made his political ambitions known, I could not help asking him how long he had been nurturing the interest in politics and
what had prompted him to abandon his position as Dean of the Medical School at a time when he was doing a fine job and was at his peak performance. And what about all his research work? In a way, I was trying to talk him out of the idea, but I also realised that the country needed some good people in political positions. I had no right to stop him. He too seemed to have made up his mind, although his answer was a typical politician’s answer – the people of Busiro North have requested me to represent them in the next Parliament. Much as I wished him to win, I was still ambivalent about it. Makerere was losing a promising Dean and a good medical scientist. After all, he had just been promoted to full Professor. Little did I know at the time that I was looking at the future Vice President of Uganda! Before he came for clearance from me, he had applied to take his sabbatical. He wanted to spend it at the University of Zambia, doing research with one of his collaborators there, and I had granted his request. Apparently, he had been doing his homework for some time. He had opened a few health centres in Busiro and was providing health care to the predominantly rural communities. Shortly before the elections, I attended a family function at Namayumba, one of the small towns on Kampala-Hoima road situated in Busiro North, and met an elderly man carrying a pile of what appeared to be calendars. Indeed, they were calendars. Whose calendars? Professor Bukenya’s. Whose portrait was on them? Professor Bukenya’s. The elderly man who looked a lot more energetic than his age told us that he was on a serious crusade, selling a precious commodity to the electorate for the forthcoming elections. Professor Bukenya, who hails from a nearby village, was the precious commodity the old man was merchandising. As far as the old man was concerned, Gilbert Bukenya was the next MP for Busiro North. The calendars were free of charge, and he gave me one. That incident happened before Professor Bukenya had made his political ambitions public. In fact, Professor Bukenya waited until the last moment to make his political ambitions known to the rest of us. I am sure he had a good reason for that. As every political aspirant knows, in politics, nothing is certain until the votes are cast and counted.

Nevertheless, I was certain that unless something made him change his mind, which seemed unlikely, it was a matter of time before he would make it known to me that he was intending to stand for candidacy in the forthcoming election, for the simple reason that the Electoral Commission had made it mandatory for aspiring candidates employed in the public service to have clearance from their employers before they could register as bona fide candidates. Nevertheless, Professor Bukenya kept everyone guessing except, perhaps, his trusted campaign scouts. He continued to work normally as if he had nothing else on his mind and making sure he did not let out his ambitions prematurely before the right time came. If you were a good Christian, you could say that the Professor was trying to avoid what young Jesus Christ was pressured to do at Cana. According to the Gospel of John, young Jesus accompanied his mother to a wedding in the
town of Cana in Galilee. As expected on such occasions, the guests feasted until
the wine ran out, but they were not yet done; so, they wanted more. Finding
himself in a fix, the groom decided to turn to Mary the mother of Jesus for a
favour; to ask her young son for a miracle. He wanted Jesus to use his divine
intervention to produce some more wine for the guests and save him the looming
embarrassment. When Mary asked her son if he could do it, something she had
never seen him do before, Jesus is quoted to have told his mother that his time for
such things had not yet come. However, being the obedient child he was, Jesus
obliged and miraculously turned water into the best wine ever. He performed
his first miracle before he was ready for his miracle ministry. No doubt, the feast
must have continued into the wee hours of the morning. When I asked Nelson
Sewankambo, one of the people closest to the Professor whether they were aware
that their Dean was about to leave them for politics, Sewankambo told me that
even he, in his capacity as Associate Dean, had no clue whatsoever about his
intention to pursue a political career, although lately he had begun to observe
small groups of people looking for his Dean and frequenting his office. He had
wondered what the frequent short meetings the Dean was holding with them
were all about. As the Namilyango boys used to say, even Nelson Sewankambo
had not yet “smelt a rat”; in other words, Sewankambo hadn’t yet had a sneaking
suspicion of his Dean’s political ambitions. It turned out that his visitors were
supporters conducting the initial political mobilisations for him, which in the
Kiganda political jargon of the time was called kakuyege. This is analogous to the
African termites’ habit of covering their trails with mud, while wreaking havoc
to anything woody underneath the covered path. In fact, a casual observer would
not know what was going on inside the mud-covered trail, despite the fact that
the termites were actually busy at work. The soft task force approach worked
well for him. In the general election of 1996, Professor Bukenya trounced all his
opponents, thus becoming the new MP for Busiro North in the sixth Parliament.
We were sad to see him go, but happy to know that one of our own had made
it to the parliamentary political echelons. From then on, he never looked back.
From an ordinary MP to Minister of the Presidency and to the Vice President of
Uganda, becoming the third Medical Doctor to occupy the office in the NRM
Government after late Samson Kisekka and Specioza Kazibwe.

After the departure of Professor Bukenya, Dr Nelson Sewankambo, who
by now had risen to the rank of Associate Professor acted as Dean for a while
until the Academic Registrar called for an election of a new Dean a few months
later. In the election, Sewankambo easily sailed through. It was the turn of the
physicians to hand over the reins of the faculty and as the joke went, it was
the turn of the thinkers. This was one of the funniest jokes I had been told on
one of my many visits to the Medical School. I was made to understand that
in the medical profession, a mild rivalry exists between the physicians and the
surgeons. Physicians liked to portray themselves as thinkers and surgeons the
butchers. However, when I inquired why the strange labels, which I thought were unbecoming of professionals like doctors, I was informed that it was an old joke in the profession. Another interesting story I learnt from the Medical School was about who made more money. According to the story, the surgeons fared better when it came to making money, but since I did not have any supporting data, there was no way I could confirm the claim. It just remained a story. Unfortunately, I never found out what the surgeons called the physicians. Nelson Sewankmombo turned out to be an excellent Dean for the faculty.

Almost two years after the cold blood murder of Professor Rodney Belcher in a car jacking, the school had more or less recovered from the shock of that gruesome murder. Unfortunately, the recovery was short-lived. Little did we know that tragedy was lurking in the dark, waiting to strike again. After relinquishing the office of Dean, Professor Joshua Mugerwa returned to his old Department of Pathology and continued teaching until one tragic Saturday morning, May 3, 1997 when someone from the Medical School called me on phone. I was still at home in the Vice Chancellor’s Lodge. I believe the caller was Professor Sewankambo or someone I do not remember. He had called to give me the news I dreaded most, particularly on weekends. Professor Joshua Mugerwa was dead. As usual, my first reaction was disbelief. I had not received any report about Joshua’s illness, so his death could not have been due to natural causes. Was it as a result of an accident, I asked? If not, how could he have died so suddenly! Much as I knew that sudden deaths do happen, Professor Mugerwa was no ordinary person; he was a medical doctor and as such I expected him to be in tip-top health. Had he died of an undetected heart attack? These were the questions that kept rushing through my mind as I listened to the caller and at the same time tried to come to terms with this dreadful news. Professor Mugerwa’s death also reminded me of a phenomenon I had observed for some time. Too often, some members of staff were dying on the weekends, moreover when the Finance Department and other university offices were closed. To make sure I had heard the caller right, I kept asking which of the Mugerwas had died. We had three Mugerwas, two in the Medical School and one in Agriculture, and all were full Professors. The caller kept reminding me it was Joshua the pathologist. Joshua Mugerwa was one of the members of staff who had weathered the storms of Uganda’s difficult time. Despite the hard times, he had gone on to earn his MD in the mid-70s. In his death, the university and the Medical School had taken another severe beating. The Medical School had lost one of its strongest pillars. It was another sad day for the well knitted university community.

In the midst of the confusion, I still wanted to know what had killed Joshua. The answer came a few hours later and it was a story that was too hard to believe. It also made a mockery of life. According to his daughter’s account, early that Saturday morning, they had travelled together in the family pick-up truck to
their farm near Mityana. The problem began when the truck suddenly fell in a fairly-deep pothole somewhere between Wakaliga and Nateete. As he manoeuvred the truck out of the pothole, he commented that the vehicle had hit the pothole too hard. Nevertheless, they continued with their journey and nothing appeared amiss. However, along the way, he started complaining of pain in the lower part of the abdomen. His daughter, who had recently qualified as a doctor, advised that they should stop there and return quickly to Kampala, which they did. As they drove back to Kampala, the pain intensified, but the brave Professor was able to drive all the way back home. He was rushed to Mulago Hospital, where his colleagues did everything they could to save his life, but it was all in vain. He died a few hours later. Here was a man who, in his professional career, had performed hundreds of post-mortems; now it was being performed on him. The post-mortem results revealed that he had died of massive internal bleeding from a ruptured main vein carrying blood from the lower parts of the body to the heart. The vein ruptured when the pick-up truck hit the pothole. Kampala's appalling roads had claimed the life of one of the country’s excellent pathologists. His untimely death was hard to forget. Mugerwa's death was followed by that of Dr Walumbe, a physiologist, who had specialised in Nuclear Medicine. He died in what I thought were strange circumstances. Much as he was a man who regularly enjoyed a bit of fun in Wandageya until the wee hours of the morning, by all accounts he was in perfect health. On the fateful day, he came home in Pool Road village late as usual and went straight to bed. He did not even have time to change his clothes. After removing the shoes, he just lay down on the bed. Lo and behold, that was the end. In fact, it took his children time to realise that there was something terribly wrong with their father until one of them ventured into his bedroom to find out why he was not waking up. When she opened the door, she found him long dead. That was another brilliant member of staff lost.

During the years I was Vice Chancellor, I witnessed first hand the big strides the Medical School was taking towards recovery, in spite of the staff shortages in some departments. Although Government had stopped funding the university’s capital development budget, which halted the rehabilitation of the School, that did not deter me from going back there again and again. I remember on one of the many occasions I had been invited to preside over the launching of the School’s latest Internet-based facility, Mednet, which was based in the Sir Albert Cook Medical Library. At the time, Dr Maria Musoke was in charge of the Medical Library. I believe the year was 1995 or early 1996, because Professor Bukenya was still Dean of the School. To demonstrate what the new system was capable of, Professor Bukenya keyed in his name and, to everyone’s surprise, the titles of all his publications up to date, both old and new, showed up on the computer screen. When another colleague of his keyed in his name, nothing showed up. It was a temporary embarrassment for this member of staff of mine. Everyone present concluded that he had no publications. He too just kept quiet.
about it. Before I declared the system launched, I rubbed it in. I warned that I would be logging on the system every now and then to check who in the School was publishing and who was not. I saw a few people shake their heads in disbelief that now it was now possible for the Vice Chancellor to find out who the lazy ones were at the touch of a button. These were the early beginnings of the serious ICT revolution at Makerere. However, the university was yet to have a reliable and easily accessible Internet and e-mail service of its own. As we shall see later, a few years earlier, the IDRC of Canada had assisted Makerere and a few other universities in the region acquire an e-mail service. At Makerere it was referred to as Mukla. The server was in the Institute of Computer Science. Interestingly, the service was being widely used, not only by the university community, but also by people outside the university who could afford to pay for the link-up. However, for some reason, the service folded up. As a result, I had to switch to Healthnet, based in the Medical School. This was an e-mail service for the use of the Medical School, launched a few years earlier. Although they allowed me to open an account on their e-mail service free of charge, my office was not linked to the system, which meant that without a direct link to the Medical School, we had to be contented with hard copies of our mail printed and posted to us from there. To put it another way, as far as my office was concerned, the system operated more or less like a glamourised post office and an inconvenience. However, better things were on the horizon.

One of the significant transformations to have taken place in the Medical School in my time was the change from the traditional curriculum that required the medical students to be examined at end of the year, to a more flexible semester and credit unit system. For the Medical School, the change-over was not easy. In fact, the critics swore that a semester system could not work in the Faculty of Medicine. They saw it as an aberration meant to replace their time-tested system, which they strongly believed had served the School well over the years. So, why try something untested? To convince them that the new system was better than the old, we had to send colleagues like Dr James Higenyi of Technology, himself a product of the semester system in the USA, to the Medical School to show them how the semester system worked. Finally, the School agreed to adopt the new system. The change involved juggling a lot of things before they got it right. It required time and some serious thinking to put all the pieces of the puzzle together. They did it to the satisfaction of Senate and the University Council. This was the beginning of even more radical changes in the school. At about the same time, the range of undergraduate programmes in the school had increased from the three, namely the MBChB, the Bachelor of Dentistry and Bachelor Pharmacy which the school used to offer before my time to five. The new additions were the BSc in Nursing launched in 1993 and the BSc in Medical Radiography. Although Professor Kajubi initiated the BSc degree in Nursing, the actualisation of the programme and the first admissions were in
my time. The postgraduate programmes also increased from one, the traditional MMed, to the MSc in Pharmacology, MSc in Anatomy, MSc in Physiology, MSc in Medical Illustration and MSc in Epidemiology and Biostatistics, which were all new additions. Most of the new Masters programmes were opened as a possible avenue for the School to develop staff, particularly for the non-clinical departments, which were struggling to recruit staff.

In spite of this impressive progress, some problems were still defying solutions. For example, the school’s undergraduate enrolment was going down due to lack of capacity in terms of staff and facilities. Yet, the demand for doctors was still rising. I remember the President asking how many doctors Makerere Medical School had so far trained since it opened in the 1920s. When I inquired, in order to give the President an informed answer, I was told that the School had not produced more than 2,000 doctors in more than seventy years of its existence and these included Kenyans, Tanzanians, Zanzibaris and other nationalities. Obviously, some of the Ugandan doctors were dead, others working outside the country, but still, this was not an impressive figure by any standard. Unfortunately, with the capital development budget cut off, it was almost impossible to expand the school’s facilities, including the badly needed expansion of the infrastructure. When the private students’ scheme began in 1992/93, the Medical School had no capacity to admit extra students, so it lost out. In fact, at the time, the school’s annual student intake had dropped from 120 in the ’60s to just about 60 in the ’80s. Given its state, it was the number the school could comfortably handle. To make matters worse, besides the grossly inadequate Government subvention, there was no other obvious source of funding to ameliorate the school’s situation. The choice was for the school to admit some fee-paying students. The demand was obviously there, but the key question was how to create the extra capacity without the means to do so to accommodate the extra students. One option was to cut back further on the number of Government-sponsored students and squeeze in a few fee-paying students, but that too had its drawbacks. The MBChB did not run like a BA in Arts, where it was possible to have both day and evening sessions. The most viable alternative was to admit a few more students above the Government threshold. The rationale was to earn some money in order to improve and expand the facilities. We had learnt from Dr Hyuha’s famous answer to those who were constantly criticising us for admitting too many students. His answer was why not get the money first and with it, improve and expand your facilities. The trick worked. Over time, the faculty started generating income and a substantial amount of that income was being invested in infrastructure improvement. By the time I left the university in 2004, even the interior of the Davis Lecture theatre that dampened my spirits on my first visit to the school in 1994 had been fully renovated. It was now a lecture hall befitting a famous Medical School and the name of the person it was named after, thanks to the efforts of Professor Nelson Sewankambo and his colleagues.
Although we did not receive any funding from the Japanese to rehabilitate the Medical School, the university did not come out of the would-be Japanese assistance totally empty handed. Unknown to us, the Ministry of Finance had been setting aside some money as counterpart funds for the Makerere portion of the Japanese grant that never was. Now that Makerere University had been excluded from the entire grant, the funds, amounting to some half a billion Ugsh which the Ministry of Finance had been saving in a project account in the Bank of Uganda, were available. Someone in the Ministry of Health, I guess one of Nelson Sewankambo's classmates at the Medical School, had heard about it and decided to alert him of Makerere's money at the Bank of Uganda. After doing some homework to ascertain whether the money was there, he gave me a brief about it. At first, I did not want to believe him, as we had had similar stories before, only to be disappointed because the money had been used for other purposes. But this one looked genuine, so I told him that together we should do everything possible to get it out of the Bank of Uganda for the Medical School. All we had to do was to contact and write to the Permanent Secretary then, of the Ministry of Finance or Secretary to the Treasury, Emmanuel Tumusiime Mutebile, requesting him to release the money to Makerere University. Knowing Mutebire's method of work, we had to be prepared to justify why he should give the money to us. Fortunately, Nelson Sewankambo had some idea about the terms of grant agreement between JICA and the Ministry of Health and therefore, what the funds were to be used for. The bulk of the grant was for equipment for Mulago Hospital. Mulago being our teaching hospital, naturally our clinical departments based there would have full access to the new equipment. However, the non-clinical departments located outside the hospital would have no new equipment. Sewankambo advised that the best way to convince Emmanuel Mutebire to release the money to Makerere was not to talk about repair of buildings, although this too was important, but to tell him that the university needed the money to buy new equipment for the biomedical departments. That sounded convincing enough, so we decided to try our luck, and it worked. In spite of the many competing demands he had to take care of, Mutebile agreed to release the money for that purpose. As soon as the money was deposited in our account at the Bank of Uganda, the process of identifying what to buy and the potential medical equipment suppliers began. Since only the departments knew what they wanted, it took much longer than we had expected to compile the list of what we had to buy. Heads of Departments had to frantically look all over the place for new catalogues with up-to-date prices. As it turned out, it was a difficult task as most of the available ones were several years out of date, the reason being that the Medical School had not been buying new equipment for several years; so the departments were not stocking up-to-date catalogues. This led to delays, not to mention the other more laborious processes that lay ahead, where more delays were anticipated.

By the time we had gone through this long and laborious process which involved, among other things, seeking approval from the University Tender
Board, calling for tenders and opening the letters of credit through the Bank of Uganda, the appreciating dollar rate had wiped US$150,000 off the initial grant. As I have mentioned earlier, at the time the Ministry of Finance agreed to release the money to the university in local currency, the full grant was worth some US$500,000. It was now worth just about US$350,000. This experience drove home the debilitating impact a weak and constantly weakening local currency could have on your purchasing power. As a result of the weak Uganda shilling, we ended up buying far less equipment than we had planned for. However, what we were able to buy with that little money was a big shot in the arm for the departments which, for years, had been starved of new and more modern equipment. But even when the equipment was delivered, the problems were not yet over. Most departments had no capacity to install them. We had to hire a firm of competent electrical engineers to verify that everything supplied complied with the specifications stated in the tender documents before they were installed. We wanted to avoid a repeat of the problems we had experienced with the equipment the Government purchased in the early ’90s with the African Development Bank loan, most of which had been supplied with missing parts or were defective at the time of delivery. That experience was still fresh in my mind. This time, we had to make sure all equipment supplied were the right models we had ordered and that they fully conformed to our requirements. Mult Konsult, the firm of engineers that won the tender to install our equipment, did an excellent job.

As the department thought of new equipment to acquire, I advised the Dean that since the enrolments were going up, it would be better to go for equipment that had in-built multiple-user facilities or which could project images onto the screen. I had in mind the modern multi-user teaching microscopes. We managed to buy a number which had ten-eye pieces and could be coupled to a computer that could cast images on a screen. When I first saw one in action in the Department of Pathology, I could hardly contain my joy. It was now possible for ten students to use the same microscope simultaneously and, at the same time, the lecturer could project those aspects of the specimen that they wanted the student to examine directly on a big screen placed in front of the class. The Medical School had entered the age of hi-tech. This was one way we were demonstrating to the critics that, using modern technology, it was possible to deliver high quality teaching and laboratory work to a large class and we were slowly driving that point home. I was, and still am, one of those who strongly believe that it is possible to provide quality university education to as many people as possible through the use of modern technology instead of relying solely on the traditional ways of lecture delivery. However, I was disappointed with the reporters who covered the commissioning ceremony in 2003, during which the new equipment was officially handed over to the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine. We had a wonderful demonstration of the new stereo ten-eye-piece microscopes in the Department of Pathology and I had gone to some length to explain how such
equipment assisted a lecturer to teach a relatively big class of students. In the following day’s edition of the papers, only a small caption with a photograph showing me looking at the new equipment was all that appeared. I wondered why the reporters had bothered to come to the ceremony but I decided not to pursue the issue with the newspaper editors. Interestingly, the equipment we bought for the non-clinical departments arrived ahead of that of the Japanese consignment for the teaching hospital. However, by the time I was leaving the university at the beginning of June 2004, the Japanese equipment had also started arriving.

Things were brightening up again for the Medical School quite nicely. Professor Sewankambo had hinted to Senate that the work of the Dean had started to overwhelm him and that an Associate Dean for the Medical School was not enough. Both were drawing in work which, in fact, was in addition to their heavy teaching and research loads in their respective departments. Therefore, the Medical School needed a second Associate Dean. He decided to table his proposal before Senate. Fortunately, Senate listened carefully, debated the merits of the proposal, found the arguments convincing and decided to recommend to the University Council the establishment of a position of a second Associate Dean in the Medical School. Other Faculties were also free to present their proposals for Senate to consider, if they so wished. Senate’s recommendation to Council also clearly prescribed and delineated the roles of the two Associate Deans. One was for research while the second was for education. However, both Associate Deans were required to assist the Dean with the day-to-day general administration of the faculty. The University Council accepted the Senate recommendation, but when subsequently the requests became too many, the University Council made it a policy for each faculty to have a second Associate Dean. The position would be filled as and when the need arose. Sam Luboga of the Department of Anatomy was elected the first Associate Dean for Education, while Elly Katabira of the Department of Internal Medicine was elected for Research. Nelson Sewankambo, a workaholic himself, was fortunate to have both men. The two were extremely hardworking and resourceful. Through their hard work, both had risen to the rank of Associate Professor in their respective departments. Now, Dean Sewankambo had no more reason to complain about excessive work. Soon, other Faculties followed his example.

On the staffing side, there was noticeable improvement too. Although the first generation of Ugandan professors in the Medical School, such as Alexander Odonga, Latmer Musoke, Sebastian Kyalwazi, Joseph Lutwama, Charles Ssali, F. M. Bulwa, J. Sekabunga, Joshua Mugerwa, Raphael Owor, Stephen B. Bosa, the famous psychiatrist, S. K. Kajubi, Josephine Nambooze Kiggundu, B. R Kanyerezi, Peter H. Ssebuwufu, J. W. Kibuukamusoke, P. G. D’Arbela and others had retired or were dead, a crop of young lecturers, who made up the second generation of Ugandan professors, was emerging fast. It was once mentioned that the British Medical Council had withdrawn recognition of our medical degrees, I believe
that was in the ’80s, citing as one of the reasons that the Department of Internal Medicine at Makerere, which was considered as one of the key departments in any Medical School, did not have a full Professor. Now, the department had two, namely Marcelino Andrew Otim and Roy Mugerwa. Soon, Nelson Sewankambo would join them as the third full Professor in the department.

In the early ’80s, the School had lost most of its top professors. At the time, Kampala’s rumour mill had it that one member of staff, supposedly a staunch supporter of the ruling party – UPC – had told the party operatives that some anti-Government professors in the Medical School were maliciously failing students and that they were targeting mainly students they suspected to be party supporters. Without having to wait for the Government security agents to pick them up, perhaps never to be seen again or to be mauled by irate students, the professors who had been identified fled the country for their security. That was the time Professor B. R. Kanyerezi, who was Head of the Department of Internal medicine at the time and Charles Olweny – the oncologist – who was also working with the Uganda Cancer Institute, went into exile. Even Professor P. G. D’Abela – the cardiologist – who had braved the situation for a while, also left.

After that exodus of its senior members of staff in the ’80s, the Department of Medicine had rallied again. In fact, one could safely say that for the Medical School, times had truly moved on. It was encouraging to see many younger members of staff moving up the academic ladder, despite the fact that there were still some problematic departments where staff recruitment and promotion was agonisingly slow. But even then, the situation was not terribly desperate any more. For the clinical departments, the Ministry of Health consultants were doing an excellent backstopping job. For the non-clinical departments, we had to keep trying as hard as we could to look for staff for them. Anatomy was one of the worst hit departments in this category. Before I took over as Vice Chancellor, my predecessors had approached the World Health Organisation (WHO) for help and had recruited a Nigerian Professor, Abiye Obuopforibo, a first degree graduate in Medicine and Surgery of the University of Lagos, with a PhD in Human Biology and Anatomy from the University of Sheffield, to provide academic leadership to the struggling department. However, on top of his teaching responsibilities in the Department of Anatomy, Professor Obuoforibo had other WHO assignments in the country, so his time was divided between Makerere and the WHO country office. Besides him, there was also a young American physical anthropologist, Dr Samiento also assisting, but it was Sam Luboga who shouldered most of the responsibility for keeping the department both academically and administratively vibrant. He succeeded his former Head and his PhD supervisor and possibly mentor, the legendary Professor Peter H. Ssebuwufu, one of the most brilliant students the Medical School has ever trained. I believe he still holds the record of the highest score of distinctions on his MBChB degree transcript.
After his admission to the British Fellowships in Surgery, a trend that most doctors in Uganda aspired to as part of their professional growth and international recognition, Ssebuwufu went to the University of Cambridge in the UK for a PhD in Anatomy, a rarity at the time. Peter Ssebuwufu, not a blood relative, was very genial and well known at Makerere for his sense of humour and funny jokes. Some people used to say that many of his jokes were dirty jokes. Once I was told of the story told of a Catholic nun who had joined the university to study Medicine and in the first few weeks of lectures in Anatomy, so the story went, she decided to quit the Medical School, allegedly because Ssebuwufu was overdoing his sense of humour. Apparently, the woman of God had found some of the professor’s jokes objectionable to her faith. Unfortunately, I never had the chance to interview Ssebuwufu about this incident, and whether he even remembered it.

Peter Ssebuwufu was also an accomplished musician and guitar player. He even cut a few PVC 45 records, as we used to call the black plastic discs on which the musicians used to record their music at the time. One of his famous hits was titled Sindika Amatafaali – (push the bricks) a Kiganda phrase that metaphorical alludes to the “pushing buttocks”, which came out in early ’70s. After listening to the funny lyrics and his melodic voice, I decided to buy it for my record collection. I guessed the record was some sort of compilation of his amusing jokes. In fact, he was so musically talented that when the Department of Music, Dance and Drama opened in the late ’60/ early ’70s, he was appointed part-time music lecturer there. In 1978, President Godfrey Lukongwa Binaisa appointed him Uganda’s Minister of Health in his short-lived Government. He amused people by promising to introduce mobile fully-equipped clinics all over the country, which he went ahead to order. Most people thought it was the usual Peter Ssebuwufu at his jokes again, but the man was dead serious. In 1980 when Binaisa’s Government fell, he temporarily went back to his department at Mulago until the elections of December that year. Apparently, the short stint he served as Minister under Binaisa had introduced him to high stakes of Uganda’s politics and its vagaries. Unknown to some of his peers, he found politics appealing and, in December 1980, he contested and won a seat as MP for his hometown, Mukono. The Democratic Party, which he had joined, lost the controversial election which it had widely anticipated to win. As a result, he ended up on opposition benches in the Parliament. However, cunning Obote was at it again. Before long, he had persuaded one of Makerere’s leading academic who by all accounts had been apolitical until Binaisa introduced him to politics, and he eventually crossed over to the Government side. He remained there until Obote’s Government fell in the coup of July 1985. At the time of writing, Professor Ssebuwufu was resident in the UK, where he had lived for many years. However, unlike his academic mentor, Dr Sam Luboga was different. The latter was more into spiritual things than temporal pop music and comical jokes.
Having failed to find sufficient numbers of young doctors with interest in Anatomy to take up teaching positions in the department, we advised the department to revive its old BSc Anatomy programme. In the ’60s and early ’70s, before it was discontinued due to lack of staff, it was one of the biomedical degree programmes which was also open to non-medical students. This, we reasoned, would be one avenue of developing staff for the department, because we had realised that Dr Sam Luboga and his skeleton staff were extremely overworked. We also encouraged the department to recruit BSc Zoology graduates and give them training in Anatomy at the postgraduate level. Mr G. M. Masilili was one of the early recruits from the Faculty of Science under this scheme. After his BSc, he enrolled for an MSc in Anatomy under Dr Sam Luboga’s supervision.

The imminent closure of the Department of Anatomy compelled the Appointments Board, the first time it had done it in my time, to bend some of its rules to help the floundering department find staff. The Board decided to waive the regulation that required one to have a minimum of a Masters degree to qualify for appointment as a lecturer in order to appoint a young brilliant doctor, Dr Juliet Bataringaya, who had only the MBChB and a good BSc in Anatomy, both degrees obtained outside Uganda. When Dr Bataringaya returned to Uganda in 1992, she was interested in teaching Human Anatomy and had applied for the position of Lecturer at the department. Technically, she had the minimum qualification for a lecturer position, but the Department of Anatomy and the School pleaded with the Appointments Board to make an exception to the rule and have her appointed full Lecturer. I suspect that although they recommended her to be appointed, they knew they were simply trying their luck. The Board was not known to bend rules, so they expected their recommendation to be rejected. But those were the pre-Mujaju Report days. It was still possible then for the Board to consider the request on its own merit and for good reasons. Anatomy, being one of the critical departments in the Medical School was extremely understaffed, yet it had to teach all first year medical students and the MMed students specialising in Surgery. By arguing that her BSc in Anatomy made up for her lack of a Masters degree, the Appointments’ Board decided to use its discretionary powers and appointed her full Lecturer. Unfortunately, after teaching in the department for just a few years, Dr Bataringaya chose to go back to Britain for a Masters degree, this time not in Anatomy but in Public Health. In 2000, she resigned from the university. It was a big loss to the department which had worked so hard to get her appointed full Lecturer with the barest of qualifications. Nevertheless, to augment the staffing situation in the Anatomy Department further, the Appointments Board agreed to transfer Dr Gabriel Nzurubara, a Surgeon from the Department of Surgery, to the Department of Anatomy. In due course, he would take over from the overworked Sam Luboga as Head of Department.
As I kept concerning myself with the affairs of the Medical School, there were moments I was tempted to believe that perhaps some departments had been opened with a curse planted at their doorstep. While many new departments blossomed as quickly as they opened and admitted their pioneer students, others failed to grow. Nursing and Dentistry were two of such departments in the Medical School which, like Anatomy, had proved extremely difficult to recruit staff for. For several years, the two departments presented us with a serious staffing problem which seemed to defy all solutions. As I thought about the problem, my mood kept swinging from concern to worry and to bewilderment. I wondered whether we had done our homework properly before we opened these departments. It was true that several older departments were also failing to attract staff, but for the clinical departments like ENT, Community Medicine – an offshoot of the community based training programme which began with a big IDRC grant support under Professor Raphael Owor as Dean – the Ministry of Health consultants, who also doubled as honorary lecturers were coming handy, offsetting the low Makerere staff numbers. We had to thank the visionaries who had done some number crunching and discovered that, without the senior staff of the Ministry of Health at Mulago, the Medical School could never ever meet all its staffing needs. In the same vein, they had also realised that there was no way Mulago Hospital could marshal all the medical expertise it needed without drawing on the specialist skills and expert knowledge of Makerere University staff. The result was an amicable symbiotic relationship between the two institutions. Whoever the visionaries were behind, one thing was certain: the Medical School is heavily dependent on the facilities of Mulago as a teaching hospital and the assistance of the Ministry of Health consultant physicians and surgeons working there for part of the clinical teaching. When the relationship between the two institutions was put in place, the understanding then was that the Ministry of Health would pay its consultants teaching on Makerere’s programmes a teaching allowance. In turn, Makerere University would pay its clinicians a clinical allowance for providing health care to the patients at the teaching hospital. However, members of staff in the non-clinical departments of the Medical School were not entitled to this allowance. This later led to some agitation which took time to resolve.

We celebrated when the Department of Nursing opened its doors to the first batch of pioneer students in the academic year 1993/94. It was like saying that, at last, Makerere University and the country at large had finally recognised the important role Florence Nightingale’s daughters and a few sons were playing in healthcare delivery. In a certain way, the occasion signified the end of an era when nurses were seen as low-skilled assistants to physicians. They could now elevate their skills to a level where they could give competent advice to the doctors. The BSc Nursing was opening up new opportunities for the nurses and midwives, who had toiled for so long with minimum recognition. It was the herald of a new beginning for the nursing profession which, in a way, was a dead-end profession.
For years, the Uganda Nursing and Midwifery Council had been agitating for this degree, but nobody had listened. Many nurses had ventured beyond the enrolled grade to the Nursing Sister grade, which at the time was the topmost professional grade that qualified them to become State Registered Nurses. Majority of nurses and midwives were content to get to that level and exchange their pink or blue uniform for the white one of a nursing sister, with a large yellow or red elastic belt to go with it. At that grade, they become Ward Sisters or Sisters-in-Charge, commanding a hoard of pink uniformed young, and some not so young, junior nurses working under them. Nursing sisters commanded high respect from the junior nurses. Occasionally, one of them became Chief Nursing Officer in one of the Government hospitals. A tiny minority read for the Nursing Tutors’ Diploma, under the aegis of Makerere University, to become nurse trainers.

That was the status of the nursing profession in Uganda then, but that was about to change. Time had moved on and the Nursing Sister grade was not good enough anymore. There was now quest for something else, something more rewarding than the nursing Sisters’ white uniform. That something was a university degree in nursing. It was the new thing to aspire to. When Nightingale founded the nursing profession during the Crimean war over two centuries ago, I am sure it never occurred to her that one day her descendants would be reading for university degrees like the doctors they were supposed to work with. Professor Senteza Kajubi calls the strive for more academic paper qualifications the “diploma disease” but, ask any high school student you find on the streets of Kampala what institution they wished to join after their “A” levels, I am sure the overwhelming majority of the respondents would tell you they preferred to attend the university. In the Africa of today, a university degree is a coveted prize even when people know in the heart of their hearts that many university degrees did not lead to automatic job placement and graduates were having a hard time finding gainful employment relevant to their degrees. That is the importance people attach to a university degree.

Before Makerere University opened a Department of Nursing, a tiny minority of tutor nurses had managed to enrol for graduate degrees in nursing at universities abroad. Mrs Specioza Mbabaali was one of them. She had studied for her Masters in Nursing at the University of Liverpool in the UK, among other professional qualifications. She had also played a vanguard role in getting the BSc degree in Nursing started at Makerere. So when the department opened in October 1993, she was one of a handful of Ugandan graduate nurses who formed the nucleus of its teaching staff, after the Appointments Board had appointed her Lecturer. Although she was not yet a Senior Lecturer, we asked her to head the new department she had helped to found. She was the best and most qualified we had. She was joined by Mrs J. Mutabaazi, who had also completed her Master of Nursing degree at the Bolton Pyne School of Nursing of Case Western
Reserve University Cleveland Ohio, USA. In fact, during its formative years, the department was regularly visited and serviced by professors from the Bolton Pyne School, who came down to Makerere to teach for a limited period of time. To a large extent, they cushioned the impact of the acute staff shortages, which the department would experience in later years when that relationship came to an end. I guess one of the critical factors we overlooked when the department opened was the fact that Uganda hardly had a sufficient pool of graduate nurses with Masters degrees. This would be the source from which the department would draw lecturers. Before long, unending staff shortages dogged the new department as we shall see later, and it was a problem that consumed a lot of Mrs Mbabaali's time. The first couple of intakes were upgrading nursing sisters and diploma-holding nursing tutors. Because they had most of the professional basics, they were exempted from the first two years of the BSc Nursing. Theirs was, in effect, a two-year course. It soon became apparent that much as they were assumed to have sufficient mastery of the foundations of the nursing profession, they had serious deficiencies in the biomedical sciences such as Biochemistry and Physiology, which they were supposed to have studied in the first two years of the normal four-year course. To remedy the situation, Senate scrapped the two-year crash programme. So from then on every student, whether upgrading or not, had to go through the full four-year course. That, of course meant more teaching for Mrs Mbabaali and a handful of her staff. Coincidentally, the pool of upgrading nurses had also dried up. The department was now admitting more school leavers than upgrading nursing sisters. We had hoped that, out of the graduating pioneer class, the department would be able to find a few of graduates who merited appointment as Assistant Lecturers or Teaching Assistants. It turned out that most of the pioneer graduates had bad academic transcripts. Others far exceeded the maximum age limit the University Council had set for the two grades. Consequently, it continued to be a struggle to stabilise the staffing situation in this department. The new emerging lucrative market for nurses in and outside Uganda was another factor aggravating an already bad situation.

Even Mrs Mutabaazi, who had been more or less second-in-command to Mrs Mbabaali, also left the department for a better paying job with an international organisation. It seemed the odds were strongly steeped against us. Mrs Mbabaali was shouldering both teaching and administrative responsibilities and I had begun to worry about her health. She could not take leave, she could not do any research, and she could not publish, so she could not be promoted. However, my sympathy alone could not make her situation any better or any easier. We had to work extra hard to find staff for her. I even tried a few applications for Fulbright fellows from the USA, but it was all in vain. Unlike other clinical departments, which had the Mulago Hospital consultants to fall back on in cases of acute staff shortages, the Nursing Department had nowhere to look. On top of all this, the Appointments Board had refused to compromise on the standard requirements...
for appointment until we had to make a strong case as we had done before for some departments which happened to be in a similar situation. We had to remind the Board that our poor terms of service were not helping matters either. It was a test of endurance for Mrs Mbabali and for us, who were actually responsible for recruiting staff for her. At some point, I thought the captain too was about to jump ship.

This was how tough it was, but by the time I was retiring in 2004, the staffing situation was already stabilising. The department had somehow managed to recruit a sizeable number of Lecturers, Assistant Lecturers and Teaching Assistants. I must say I was extremely grateful to Mrs Mbabali who never lost her cool, confidence or captivating smile in the hardest of those times. The departure of Mrs Mutabaazi hit her the hardest; nonetheless, even when the situation looked so hopeless and when some would have thrown in the towel, she was steadfast. To make matters worse for her, she was still operating from a near-derelict borrowed building, and I had no money for new buildings for her department. I had made it a point that whenever she made an appointment to see me or whenever I found her waiting for me early in the morning, I would give her priority because, more often than not, I knew well in advance what she had come to see me about. Incidentally, her younger sister Regina was married to an old classmate at Namalyango, Fred Sekandi, and she used to assist me a lot when she was Commissioner-in-charge of the national budget at the Ministry of Finance. As the old saying goes, one good turn deserves another. When Specioza Mbabali finally applied to take her long overdue leave, I gladly granted it to her.

Dentistry was another one of those new departments that seemed not to grow. When it opened in 1982, Associate Professor Stanley Ecece (now deceased) was running it almost single-handedly. It had virtually no equipment of its own except what was available in the teaching hospital and a few pieces in the paramedical Dental School. However, at the beginning of the 1990s, Friends of Makerere in Canada (FOMAC), a Canada-based organisation founded by Professor Charles Olweny, the oncologist, took an interest in the new department and connected it to a religious organisation in Canada, called Sisters of St Joseph, based in the city of Hamilton in Ontario. The organisation started donating new and used equipment to the department, including dental chairs and other dental accessories. These donations made a difference, but were still a drop in the ocean. However, unlike the Department of Nursing, the Department of Dentistry recovered much more quickly from the doldrums. Several young graduates who had done well at their undergraduate level were appointed Assistant Lecturers. Much as most of them came in the department at these training grades, it was a good start. The appointment of Dr L. Muwazi was one of the early appointments there.

Young Louis Muwazi was asked to head the department almost as soon as he was appointed Lecturer. I knew it would be tough on him, but there was little
we could do about it. When Associate Professor Ecece died, someone had to step into his shoes, lest the department was closed down. I must say that despite my initial concerns about his ability to manage a department, which had teething problems, the young man's performance went beyond our expectations. He was later joined by Mwanika, who had studied Dentistry in Cairo. He was one of those Lecturers I had given a six-month temporary appointment, while we waited for the Appointments Board to process his papers, because Muwazi and I did not want to lose him. That was before the Mujaju Report came into effect. When his application finally came to the Appointments Board for consideration, the Board downgraded him to Assistant Lecturer because he did not have a PhD or its equivalent.

That hurt Dr Muwazi and me, who had worked so hard to attract him to the department, but those were the new rules. The Appointments Board was only implementing University Council’s policies. Members of the Board seemed oblivious of the hell we were going through to attract staff to some departments. I was equally angry with some of my colleagues in administration who looked on with indifference at the desperate situations where departments requested us to make temporary staff appointments, while waiting for a proper appointment process to take its course and time, as if what was happening in these poorly staffed departments was none of their business. So, when Mwanika’s appointment was downgraded, he could not understand why. I had to give a lot of explanation to him on behalf of the Appointments Board of which at the time I was not even a member. He almost resigned. We had to persuade him to stay for the sake of the department. This experience reminded me why some of my predecessors used to walk out of Council and Appointments Board meetings. I believe such frustrating moments drove them crazy. In our case, some members of the Board had even made it more or less a routine whenever they came for the Board meetings to criticise the University Management and the university as a whole, as if the responsibility to appoint staff did not rest with them. We were trying hard to get out of a ditch into which some of our infamous leaders had plunged the country and the university into in the ’70s and early ’80s, and as such I expected a little more understanding than I was sometimes getting. Nevertheless, the department’s staffing situation slowly started to stabilise and two practising senior dentists, Drs Nkuruhenda and Tutyabule agreed to do some part-time teaching. Their services came in very handy when some of the young members of staff were out studying for their postgraduate degrees and we had to find someone to fill in the gap. This was about the time when Dr Aishah Bataringaya’s Masters degree study programme at the University of the Western Cape in South Africa almost ran into problems, when she decided to return to Uganda for a short holiday, not realising that for her to graduate she had patients to constantly monitor. The university wanted her to start that part of her training all over again on account of the fact that she had missed part of it. We were sponsoring her and our funds
were very limited, so I had to intervene so she could be allowed to repeat only the
bits of her work that she had missed. After exchanging several letters and making
numerous calls to her supervisor and Dean of the School, we eventually reached
a consensus and she was allowed to continue.

Dr Aishah Bataringaya had gone to study at the University of the Western
Cape on a Makerere University staff development fund scholarship. At about the
same time, Dr Charles Mugisha Rwenyonyi, who had obtained his doctorate in
dentistry from the University of Bergen in Norway, also joined the teaching staff
of the department. Before I left the university, the hardworking Dr Muwazi had
risen to the rank of Senior Lecturer. The department had a teaching staff strength
of seventeen, which included two part-time lecturers and three honorary lecturers
from the Ministry of Health. Although most of them were at junior rank level,
they were making steady progress in terms of acquiring higher academic and
professional qualifications and participating in research.

**Institute of Public Health**

The next big transformation that occurred in the Medical School near the end of
my tour as Vice Chancellor was the decision of the University Council to grant
the Institute of Public Health (IPH) independence from the Faculty of Medicine.
The institute, which started in a humble way as a Department of Preventive
Medicine, had grown into an autonomous unit at the level of a faculty. In essence,
there were now two faculties at Mulago; Medicine and Public Health. When
Professor Gilbert Bukenya became Dean of the Faculty of Medicine in 1995, Dr
Fred Wabwire Mangheni took over as Director of the Institute. He proved to be
a man quick on the draw. He seized the opportunity and mobilised his colleagues
to get together and work on the proposal for the institute’s autonomy. Before
we knew it, they were ready to present their proposal to the Faculty Board of
Medicine. After the usual arguments and counter-arguments, the proposal was
passed and was ready for Senate.

As I have pointed out before, whenever Senate received well prepared and
written documents with very strong and plausible arguments, good and logical
analysis, it took a relatively short time to approve a proposal and recommend it
for adoption by the University Council. Fred Mangheni’s proposal fell into that
category. More often than not, Council concurred with Senate. Even this time,
Council approved the IPH autonomy from the Faculty of Medicine without
delay, but gave both of them a few months to sort out some residual matters,
before they severed the link completely.

When it came to electing the new Director, who was now at the level of a full
Dean of a faculty, again Dr Wabwire was the obvious choice for the job. He was
now the Director of an IPH transformed into a faculty. As was usually the case,
with autonomy came departmentalisation. Instead of a single entity as it was
before, they decided to sub-divide the faculty into four departments: Epidemiology and Biostatistics; Health Policy Planning and Management; Community Health and Disease Control and Environmental Health. All the existing staff had to be redistributed amongst the four new departments according to their specialisation. My long serving cousin, Dr Christine Zirabamuzaale, suddenly found herself heading the Department of Community Health, while another long serving colleague, Dr Joseph Konde Lule (by now an Associate Professor), was assigned the responsibility of running the Epidemiology and Biostatistics Department. Dr Baine, a much younger man with a PhD from the University of Keele in the UK took on the Health Policy Planning and Management and Dr. David Serwadda (also now an Associate Professor) became the Head of Disease Control and Environmental Health. Before ink dried, opportunities were knocking on the door of the now independent institute. Soon after it became autonomous in 2002, the Melinda Bill Gates Foundation extended a generous grant to Makerere University for AIDS research and awareness campaigns. The IPH was the lead unit on the awareness campaign programme. Again, Dr Wabwire was the obvious choice for the programme's team leader. After accepting this new and rather heavy responsibility, he decided to step down as Director of the Institute. Dr David Serwadda replaced him as Acting Director.

**Transforming the Faculty of Medicine into a College of Health Sciences**

The revival of our Medical School, from near total collapse to a state where it was being transformed into a College of Health Sciences, was nothing short of a miracle. The Medical School survived the hard times in its history and continued to produce doctors of acceptable standards because there were men and women there, past and present, the departed and the many that had to leave Uganda against their will, who never gave up even in the midst of crushing difficulties. They refused to let their once renowned Medical School in Africa die and, in so doing, they learnt and mastered the art of improvisation and carried on regardless of the odds, never losing hope that one day, things will take a turn for the better. But there were also many who chose to go on their free will to join the ever-growing new voluntary form of African slavery conveniently dubbed brain drain, wishing the ship called Makerere University Medical School would sink in their absence. Fortunately, the ship refused to sink but rather stayed afloat. I believe that by recounting the story of the survival of the Medical School, I have paid a fitting tribute to the many members of staff, who made the miracle happen and the road to recovery possible. For example, I could never have imagined that one day I would visit the National Institute of Health (NIH), in Bethesda near Washington DC and learn that names like Nelson Sewankambo, Elly Katabira, Philippa Musoke and many more were already household names among the top American health research scientists there, with remarkable reference to their outstanding
research work on HIV/AIDS and the fact that Makerere University Medical School had the largest share of the NIH’s budget in Africa.

I heard those things being said to me when I was in the USA in 2003 on a Carnegie Corporation of New York-sponsored study tour of the top American research institutions and universities on the East Coast. We were nine Vice Chancellors on that tour; two from East Africa and seven from West Africa but I did not hear names of researchers from other universities in Africa mentioned. Perhaps, I was temporarily absent-minded, but I am sure I never heard any names from other parts of Africa, including the universities whose Vice Chancellors were on the same tour with me. Knowing pretty well the deep pit our Medical School had bootstrapped itself from, I found it too hard to hold back my tears as I listened to my American colleagues struggle to pronounce the long African names without me helping them out of their linguistic predicament. I must say it was a defining moment for me and the peak of my pride as Makerere’s Vice Chancellor. I was convinced that all that was being said was in recognition of my colleagues for the good job they had done. In the same token, as we sat there and listened, I could not forget the many partners and friends of Makerere who, over the years, had provided the badly needed financial support which kept the School not only alive, but also out of the ditch and set it firmly on the road to full recovery.

Perhaps I should end the account of my last visit to the Medical School on something that I thought I would fight for to the bitter end, but all the time I kept failing to achieve, although I never really drew a blank. Africa’s intellectuals and highly skilled human resources, and lately even those who are not so highly educated or skilled, are leaving Africa in hoards for Europe, North America, Japan, Australia and other wealthy countries in larger numbers than ever before, because we have failed to recognise their true value, which perhaps would have allowed them to stay and serve their individual countries, instead of seeking the proverbial greener pastures outside Africa. We have over-laboured the excuse that we cannot pay decent wages because our economies are too weak to support such wages. In today’s globalised economy, there is a huge market for the brightest brains. People freely sell their labour and skills to the highest bidder in the market. In Africa, we are the lowest bidder and as long as we remain so, Africa’s brain haemorrhage will continue. Every time I walked into the office of the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at Mulago, one thing that never escaped my mind was the poor terms and conditions of service that left me with no room to reward excellence and work above self, as every so often Rotarian Avitas Tibirimbasa used to remind me.

As far as I can remember, the first staff pay rise in my time as Vice Chancellor came in 1994, after a MUASA-led strike when Joseph Carasco (now deceased) was chairman of the Association. The increase put a full Professor’s basic salary at about USh 400,000 (186 USD) per month, up from about USh 150,000 (70USD) a month. Government also promised to review and make further improvements in
the pay package for Makerere staff as soon as possible. We waited, but Government never fulfilled its promise to staff, until MUASA went on strike again. This coincided with the Presidential elections of 1996. It was led by Dr Moses Katende-Mukiibi of the Department of Surveying in the Faculty of Technology, who had taken over as chairman of the Association from Joseph Carasco. This time, the strike was a protracted affair and costly. At some point, we seemed to be heading for a stalemate as no side was talking to each other. I recall a senior colleague in the Main Building approaching me and suggesting that we should use all means to break the impasse. What complicated our ability to negotiate with Government was the contradictory statements coming from the Ministry of Finance on the one hand and Ministry of Public Service on the other.

 Shortly before MUASA decided to go on strike, there were indications that a strike could be averted. We had attended a meeting at the Ministry of Finance in an attempt to resolve the outstanding issue pertaining to the living wage MUASA was agitating for. During the meeting, an official of the Ministry had agreed to our proposal that a non-Medical Professor’s salary be raised to the equivalent of UgX 1,100,000 per month and UgX 1,300,000 per month for a Medical Professor respectively. A Junior Lecturer at the bottom of the scale of that grade would start at UgX 500,000 a month. MUASA officials, led by their chairman Katende-Mukiibi, also attended that meeting. The MUASA delegation thought that the proposal was a good starting point for better things expected to come in future and promised to recommend it to their members. Although nothing was in writing yet, we came out of the meeting satisfied; after all, we had been informed that the Minister of Finance had given the officials the mandate to negotiate with us. However, as we were winding up the discussions, the meeting chairman cautioned us that before the Ministry of Finance could implement the agreed new wage structure for Makerere, the Ministry of Public Service had to give its approval to the proposal. It was therefore important for us to seek audience with the officials responsible for the Government payroll there. My first reaction was a naïve one. I had assumed that once the Ministry of Finance gave the assurance of its ability to pay the proposed new salaries, it was a done deal. I did not expect or even anticipate the Ministry of Public Service to raise an objection on what we had agreed with the Ministry of Finance officials. But I was dead wrong!

 During our first meeting at the Ministry of Public Service, the officer-in-charge of the Government payroll told us point blank that the Ministry of Finance had no mandate to fix salaries; that salaries and wages for public servants was the responsibility of the Ministry of Public Service. Secondly, there was no way the Ministry of Public Service was going to approve such a hefty pay rise for only Makerere University staff. We reminded her that the meeting at the Ministry of Finance was sanctioned by the Minister and we were simply reporting the position agreed at that meeting. The lady was in no mood to listen and she would not
move an inch from her stated position. Instead, she promised to take up the matter with the Ministry of Finance officials herself. As usual, the MUASA executive was present at that meeting. Dr Katende-Mukiibi told her that he was disappointed and was returning to Makerere to report to his members, and that one thing was certain; members of the academic staff would lay down their tools. The official’s response was “if Makerere staff wanted to arm-twist the Government, so be it”.

When Dr Katende convened a MUASA general meeting and briefed them on what had transpired at the meeting with the Ministry of Public Service officials, the reaction was as predicted; the general assembly declared a strike there and then. I was really disappointed with Government officials who seemed to be insensitive to the plight of Makerere staff. To add salt to the wound, the same Ministry had recently awarded Judges, Medical Consultants and one or two other categories of public servants an unprecedented pay rise, which put a judge’s salary at the equivalent of UgX 3,000,000 per month. It was hard to understand the logic behind the selective pay rises by the same employer. Moreover, I was left to struggle with the consequences and pick up the pieces for a decision I was not responsible for. The Ministry of Public Service had precipitated a crisis at the university and left it to me to manage. As the strike continued, we were being invited to meeting after meeting with the Ministry of Finance which, in the first place, had indicated it would pay the new salaries. The meetings which were initially aimed at resolving the crisis were now becoming more and more acrimonious. The Ministry of Finance officials were trading accusations amongst themselves; the senior officials blaming their juniors for committing the Government to a pay rise to Makerere University staff when they had not been given the mandate to do so. I wondered why in the first place they had been asked to meet us if they were not empowered to commit Government to anything! My colleagues who were attending the meetings with the MUASA executive members who had accompanied us were equally baffled. As far as we were concerned, the meetings were unproductive and a waste of time. All we had achieved was simply to go back to square one, when we thought we had made a breakthrough during the first meeting we had had with the Ministry of Finance, which could have helped us avert a costly strike. Now we were deadlocked, the strike continued with no end in sight. It was time to change our strategy.

From the start of my tour as Vice Chancellor, I realised that low remuneration would be one of the trouble spots and potentially a flash point for a showdown between the university and the Government. I was fully aware of the likely impact a staff strike could have on the university, but I also knew that it would be extremely difficult to convince Government to award Makerere staff a substantial pay rise in one go. So I was well prepared for that eventuality. It was now time to explore some of the options I had been toying for quite some time. I had been thinking on how best we could improve staff salaries from our own resources
without recourse to Government. The strike pre-empted those ideas. However, the longer the strike dragged on, the more I was convinced that time had come to look at this option a little more critically. It was time to put the cards on the table and hope that the ace in the deck would pull it off. However, to be certain of our ability to pay the new salaries from our own resources sustainably, I needed accurate data on our income-generating capacity. Ben Byambabazi, the University Bursar, was a man with a good mastery of figures. It was time to call him in to do some number crunching. I used to sit with him in my office for several hours, calculator in hand. Sometimes, we would stay until late at night, generating as many scenarios as we could think of. Ben Byambabazi was making sure that whatever new wage bill proposal we came up with was affordable and sustainable. Finally, we thought we had cracked it. We could now put the proposal to the Finance Committee of the Council.

The Council Chairman, Dr David Matovu, was also the Chairman of the Finance Committee. I had made sure, right from the beginning of the strike and even before, that he was kept fully informed of every development that was taking place at the university. This was the way things worked. He too would come to the university and sit down with us as we grappled with the many problems we had to attend to, throwing in a word of wise counsel or two. The Finance Committee was finally convinced and Ben Byambabazi took the members through a number of options we had generated, finally zeroing on the one we believed was the most affordable and sustainable. As usual, our good friend Joel Kahenano of the Bank of Uganda attended the meeting. However, as much as the committee appreciated our effort in the hour of crisis, members wanted our figures to be verified by other people for the committee to satisfy itself that the proposal was attainable and the university could raise the money on a continuous and sustainable basis. What we were proposing had never been done at Makerere before. Government paid staff salaries and other staff emoluments with resource to the university, hence the need to be that extra cautious.

In times of financial crises, the University Council turned to Mr Joel Kahenano, who was one of the Directors in the Bank of Uganda, for advice. He was one of those people gifted with the wit for finding solutions to our seemingly terrible financial difficulties. He accepted to scrutinise the figures we had presented to the committee. Mr Kahenano worked with the University Bursar and one or two other people and came up with a pay package similar to the one which the Ministry of Finance official had proposed in our first meeting with them. The MUASA executive had accepted it before the strike. Mr Kahenano’s proposal however differed slightly from what Ben Byambabazi and I had proposed to the Finance Committee. In addition, he confirmed the university’s ability to meet the new salary package from its internally-generated income. Now the question was, would some of the more militant MUASA members accept the new package?
We decided not to jump the gun. But before the Chairman of the University Council could meet MUASA members to announce the university’s offer, the entire Council had to approve the Finance Committee’s proposal first.

The University Council had been called once before for a briefing on the ongoing MUASA strike. This was the second time it was being called in less than a month as members of staff had representatives on the University Council. After more than two weeks of stalemate, it would be an opportunity to gauge their mood and assess whether the University Council’s offer was likely to be accepted. Although the staff representatives refused to commit themselves one way or the other beyond saying the rank and file would consider it and make a decision, one could sense that fatigue was setting in and chances of rejecting the council’s offer outright were minimal. However, we had to wait and see.

The University Council mandated Dr Matovu and the Vice Chancellor to initiate talks with the MUASA executive on the new pay offer. Dr Matovu was one person I never heard raise his voice even when the situation warranted it; so his composure was to come in handy. As expected, MUASA had a lot of firebrands in its rank and file. So we did not expect an easy ride. We expected to be heckled and booed when we met them. At all such occasions, members of my Central Executive were always with me. This time when we met the entire MUASA membership in the Main Hall, all were there with me also. The process began with a meeting with the MUASA executive in the Council Room. I had expected a stormy meeting, but it was an amicable one. After the Chairman of Council had addressed the MUASA executive, they invited us to meet the staff at a general MUASA meeting in the Main Hall. I had a feeling that it was going to be a rowdy gathering but, after almost three weeks on strike, I guessed most members of staff were getting tired of the impasse. After we had addressed them and put the council’s proposal to them, they asked us to leave them alone in the Hall to consider the proposal. What followed next was like pure magic. The members voted overwhelmingly to accept the new salary package and to end the strike. That was history being made at Makerere, because that was the first time staff salaries were supplemented from the University’s private income. According to the new package, a non-Medical Professor’s salary was now well over a million shillings a month, the equivalent of US$ 1,000 a month; and for the Medical Professor, it was about the equivalent of US$1,300 a month. For the first time, Makerere staff was the highest paid in any public university in East Africa. It was a remarkable feat and although it had come at a cost, we had reason to celebrate the achievement. We could now pay our colleagues in the Medical School salaries above the Ministry of Health Consultants. At the time, mid-1996, the money had value too. Now, I had some good news to report to my colleagues in the Medical School who had petitioned me about the disparities between their salaries and that of the Ministry of Health Consultants, alongside whom they were working.
We were glad the strike was finally over. It had drained our physical and mental energy and I was tired. But it was also time to count the cost. Remembering that, each day, student upkeep alone cost the university close to UgX 100 million or the equivalent of US$100,000, this strike was the most expensive in recent years. If it had continued unresolved much longer, we would have had to send the students home and close the university. However, for some of the striking staff, the students had to be present for the strike to have maximum impact. They did not want to see them go. This tactic was akin to using human beings as shields in a war situation. However, some students had started demanding to know why they were not being taught. In one or two faculties, staff had continued teaching the evening students, but student leadership stepped in and stopped it, saying that if staff is on strike, everything to do with teaching should stop. Whenever there is a strike at Makerere, the Medical School bears the fullest brunt of the lost time, because they happen to run the tightest time table. They need every available hour to cover the syllabus properly. This strike was no exception. In fact, some members of Council wanted the strike leaders taken to court to pay for the loss. However, in the end, the spirit of reconciliation prevailed. No action was taken against the strike leaders.

I had a lingering suspicion about the timing of the strike. To me, it bore the hallmark of a ploy, perhaps dreamed up by some of President Museveni’s opponents as a political weapon to discredit him during the forthcoming Presidential election, as a man who never kept his promises and therefore could not be trusted. It was as if they were telling the electorate; “See how Makerere is on fire now, because Museveni had promised staff there a living wage but had never given it to them since 1989. So, out of frustration and disillusionment, they had decided to go on strike as a last resort”. In fact, it was a ploy that resonated well with staff at Makerere because, for them, it touched the raw nerve where it mattered most – their welfare. Beyond the gates of Makerere, it was a different game altogether. The old “town and gown” mentality had never gone away completely. So those who believed that they would make political capital out of a Makerere staff strike over pay and allowances had not done proper homework. The ordinary man and woman did not care about what happened at Makerere, so the ploy – if it were a ploy – was doomed for failure right from the start. Whoever had advised some presidential aspirants that such a ploy would work was either a day dreamer or at best a part-time thinker. The ordinary folks still loved their Museveni, no matter what, and a strike at Makerere over a pay rise was not a threat that would dissuade them to suddenly change their mind. Indeed, the results of the 1996 presidential election were a clear demonstration of that. Makerere was simply too far detached from their ordinary lives. However, whatever the original motive was, the strike did not end in total failure for MUASA. If anything, MUASA came out the winner and it had won another battle for better pay for its members, though the war for a living wage was far from over. The Medical School was one of the partakers of the spoils. The Medical School had fallen, but like a cat, it had landed on its feet.
Faculty of Arts – From the Brink

There was – and still is – a mistaken belief that arts are for the supposedly weak students who cannot cope with the intellectual demands of the sciences. So studying for a BA degree, what some students referred to as the BA flat at Makerere, was seen not so much as a sign of intellectual prowess, but a lack of it. Moreover, the fact that for years, the BA students had the least number of contact hours in the whole university, that is, about 120 contact hours spread over a period of three academic years kept reinforcing this stereotypical thinking. Students in the Science-based faculties were sweating with much bigger workloads.

Once in 1995, after the Academic Registrar had carried out an academic audit that clearly revealed what most people had long suspected that the BA programme in Faculty of Arts had the least number of contact hours, this generated heated debate at Senate. Some members were of the view that the contact hours were too few to warrant a three-year degree programme; even arguing that it was the excessive redundancy that encouraged students in the Faculty of Arts to engage in unbecoming behaviour and hooliganism. They went on to suggest that the duration for the BA degree be condensed to two years. Members of Senate from the Faculty of Arts did not take so kindly to this proposal. They thought that the proposal was preposterous. I later learnt that it was a topic for serious corridor talk at the Faculty of Arts for some time. They believed that some of their colleagues from other faculties, particularly from the Sciences were conceitedly ridiculing the intellectual nature and contribution of the Humanities and were out to demean their degrees. But even students used to think that if you came to Makerere to study for a BA degree, you came to enjoy life, and you were essentially on a year’s vacation. The workload was rather light. However, what used to baffle the science students most was that BA graduates found better paying jobs much more easily than science graduates. In fact, some students had coined the expression – “minimum effort, maximum benefits”, likening it to the mechanical advantage concept in Physics. However, we chose not to pursue the idea of a two-year BA honours degree. We worked on better ways of going around the problem. In due course, the semester system would eliminate disparities and distortions in the university’s programmes. Soon, every student would have to study for a minimum number of credit hours to graduate. So, the Faculty of Arts was spared the embarrassment of downgrading its BA degree to two years. But one thing I knew for sure was that if we had insisted on a two-year BA programme, the faculty would have put up a spirited fight.

At the time I became Vice Chancellor, the Faculty of Arts had the lowest enrolment. I remember Professor Epelu Opio, who was Chairman of the Admissions Board, commenting that there were fewer than sixty students selecting the Faculty of Arts as their first choice. According to him, it was a faculty on the way out. However, in due course, all that would change through the innovative leadership of Professor
Oswald Ndolerire as Dean. Besides the BA in Mass Communication, which Dr Francis Kidubuka (now deceased) initiated in the Department of Literature in the ’80s, there were hardly any new programmes the faculty had initiated since then. When Dr Ndolerire, an accomplished linguist and an expert in the French language; having obtained his doctorate from the prestigious Sorbonne in Paris, became Dean in 1995, he started talking of professionalising the faculty. It was a peculiar, yet catchy word. I am sure when I first heard him say it, my initial reaction was that he was talking about something hazy and possibly far-fetched. How do you professionalise subjects like History and Religious Studies, for instance? Would you call them Applied History or Applied Religious Studies? Wasn’t he familiar with the old saying that the leopard never changes its spots? Apparently, Oswald Ndolerire and some of his forward-looking colleagues were talking about a totally different school of thought that had nothing to do with Applied Arts as I had imagined. I must admit that, in many ways, they were a step ahead of many of us, at the cutting edge of ingenuity and innovation. In essence, they were saying that time had come for the old leopard called the Faculty of Arts, that never changed its birth spots even when the terrain was fast changing, to change to one that had the will and ability to attune to the changing times and modernise.

The Faculty of Arts has its origins in the liberal and general studies that Makerere College used to offer at diploma level before it started awarding the degrees of London in 1949. At that time, the Arts and Social Sciences were integrated as one unit. The Social Sciences evolved into a faculty of their own in 1963, but up to the mid-1970s, the two Faculties had a joint Board of Studies and before the university adopted the semester system, a student would register at the Faculty of Social Sciences for a 3.2.2 degree with one of the subjects studied in the Faculty of Arts. For example, a student could graduate with a joint honours degree in Economics and Geography. Economics was offered at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Geography at the Arts Faculty. Even under the semester system, it was still possible for a student to have a major in Social Sciences and the minor in the Faculty of Arts or vice versa. Once upon a time, even Mathematics was offered in the Faculty of Arts as well. Geology was there too as part of the Department of Geography. The faculty had grown with Makerere and, over the years, it had produced some of the most distinguished personalities in Africa. The current President of the United Republic of Tanzania was a BA English student there in the 1950s. President Mwai Kibaki too was a student there and so were the distinguished Kenyan playwright, James Ngugi (now Ngugi wa Thion’go), David Rubadiri, now Vice Chancellor of the University of Malawi, and many more.

The Faculty of Arts is located to the south of the Main Building and occupies two buildings built in different styles. The older building, constructed in the 1950s and originally called the Queen’s Courts, but after independence changed to Arts Courts; and a much smaller pre-fabricated building immediately below
the Queen’s Courts to the west, constructed in 1970. The smaller building was originally the home of the Faculty of Law, but when Professor Abraham Kiapi (now deceased) decided to move the faculty to its present location, the building was passed on to the Faculty of Arts to house the Institute of Languages. The old building is shaped in the form of the capital letter A, a design similar to the older Faculty of Agriculture building. I guess the same architect designed them and wanted to maintain symmetry on both sides of the Main Building. The Arts Courts are separated from the Main Building by the St Francis Chapel, much in the same way as the Faculty of Agriculture is separated from the Main Building by the St Augustine Chapel. The Arts or Queen's Courts is a building with some unique features that distinguish it from other buildings in the university; namely, it has a colonnade that forms part of the open entrance to the building which faces east, opposite the Faculty of Social Sciences. The columns designed in classic Greek-Romano style are covered with a climbing plant, which I believe is an ivy plant a close relative of the type found on many older buildings in the USA. The external stone skirt of the building is also covered by the same plant. Beside these two buildings, the Department of Music, Dance and Drama (MDD), occupies two old 1930s tin-roofed bungalows along the Pool Road on the northern side of the new Senate Building. During the tenure of Professor Ndolerire as Dean, proposals were made to construct a new multi-storied building for the faculty on the site currently occupied by the MDD, but for reasons we shall explain later, the plans did not materialise.

In terms of departments, Arts is the second largest faculty in the university, after the Faculty of Medicine. It comprises eight academic departments and one institute which is yet to become autonomous: Geography; History; Literature; Music, Dance and Drama; Philosophy; Religious Studies; the Institute of Languages, which by the time I left in 2004, was still at the departmental level, and the new Department of Mass Communication. Philosophy and Religious Studies used to be one department, but the two went their separate ways in the 1980s with Professor Dalfovo, the long-serving Italian Catholic priest of the Comboni Fathers, heading the Department of Philosophy and Father Byaruhanga Akiki remaining the Head of the Department of Religious Studies. Similarly, the Institute of Languages started out as a unit in the Department of Literature, but broke away to become the Department of English and Language Studies or ELS (as it was popularly known). However, during Professor George Kirya’s tenure as Vice Chancellor, the department successfully lobbied and was promised the status of an institute on the lines of IPH in the Medical School.

I recall how hard Professor Ruth Mukama, the first woman to be promoted to the rank of full Professor during my first few years as Vice Chancellor and possibly the first Ugandan women to head the faculty as Dean, struggled to have the institute formally approved in Senate and Council. Unfortunately, by the
time I returned to Makerere in late 1993, the promised status had not yet been granted. That was one of the first issues we had to sort out during the first few years of my administration. I failed to understand why it had taken so long for the status to be granted. As we have seen elsewhere, Mass Communication as a degree programme at Makerere was the brain child of late Francis Kidubuka, one of the few members of staff in the Department of Literature who had a PhD at the time. The others I could recall were Katebalirwe Amooti wa Irumba, Arthur Gakwandi and Professor Timothy Wangusa. By 1993, Mass Communication was one of the most popular degree courses in the Faculty of Arts. We can safely say that Mass Communication was the first professional degree programme in the Faculty of Arts and it contributed significantly to the revival of the faculty's fortunes. Unfortunately, due to constraints that included insufficient staffing, the Bachelor of Mass Communication had a very small number of students – not more than ten students a year – and remained so for a very long time. This also made it one of the most competitive courses at Makerere. The pioneer students had to hammer out their assignments on the old mechanical typewriters. The department had no computers then.

As a new Vice Chancellor, one of the first things I did for the Faculty Arts was to find some money, which I used to buy three computers for the faculty. Two went to the Mass Communication section and the other to the office of the Head of Department of Literature. At the time, Enerst Okello Ogwang, a promising young man who had some social problems, was the Head of Department. I learnt later that in spite of my explicit instructions, some misunderstanding arose as to how the computers were to be shared within the department, but the problem was later amicably resolved. However, as the demand for the Mass Communication degree continued to grow beyond the annual intake to the course, coupled with the idea of offering an evening programme, it became apparent that Mass Comm (as it was popularly referred to) had come of age. It was time to allow the unit to grow into a full-fledged independent department within the Faculty of Arts. The Faculty Board, Senate and the University Council swiftly worked on the approval process and Mass Communication was approved as a department. So it broke away from the Department of Literature, thus becoming the eighth department in the faculty. The departmental staff strength had also risen to more than twelve. What intrigued me about the Mass Communication programme, which I was not aware of at the time, was the requirement that a Mass Communication student had to take a content subject as well – more or less like Education and Library and Information Science. After acquiring the status of a department, with Ms Linda Goretti Nassanga as its first head, it was time to think of other things and work out a road map for its future. Besides a proper home, staff who had specialised in the electronic media were now asking for a training FM radio of their own, based on the university campus. Up until then, the department was relying on the goodwill of Radio Uganda and some private FM Radio stations.
in Kampala for the practical component of the broadcasting course programme. However, it was not always easy to fit trainee students on the schedules of these broadcasting houses.

Fredrick Nagenda Musoke, who had returned with a Masters degree from the University of Houston, Texas, was the first member of staff to float the idea of a university-owned training FM radio station to me. He wanted us to look for a donor who would fund such a project. It was a long shot and likely to be a tough sale. I almost asked Fredrick Musoke whether we were not sending ourselves on a wild goose chase, but my usual never-give-up instinct took the better of me. Although, I strongly suspected that we would draw lots of blanks before we found one, as most donors – including our traditional ones – would find it hard to give us funds to set up an FM radio station. To many people, an FM radio station would be seen as a luxury, or at best a commercial venture which had little or no relevance to the university’s hard pressing needs. Nevertheless, we decided to have a go at it. I even thought of asking Mr Ben Byambabazi to include it in the university’s budget estimates for the following financial year. However, my past experience with the Government officials at the Treasury cautioned me not to bother, as there was no way the Ministry of Finance would give the university money to set up an FM radio station.

Musoke’s request was a challenge I did not want to let go. I promised that I would work with him to identify a source of money. One strategy was to sell the idea to as many potential donors as possible. Musoke wrote the proposal, which I vetted and mailed to wherever we could think of. The UNDP was one of the UN agencies that financed development programmes in Uganda. Lately, the agency had shifted focus to poverty eradication and other programmes not related to higher education. As we have already seen, the UNDP had supported Makerere University for a long time, particularly during the hard times of the 1970s and ’80s. Although it had stopped giving direct support to Makerere University, we believed that the idea of training human resources that could pass on messages to rural communities about poverty eradication through radio was something UNDP could buy into, so we requested an audience with the UNDP Resident Representative in Kampala, to introduce the idea to him. I reasoned that even if they would not give the money directly to the university for the purpose, they could include it in the UNDP’s contribution to Uganda’s budget support for poverty eradication related activities.

At the time, Dr Babatunde Thomas, a Nigerian, was the UNDP Resident Representative in Uganda. He was one the few international experts working in Uganda. A staunch Catholic, he never missed mass at the Christ the King Church. He was kind enough to grant us an audience. I went to see him with Musoke Fred, the idea bearer. After a good discussion, he politely gave us the news we perhaps had not quite prepared for. Although he thought the idea was
good, the UNDP Kampala had no budget from which he could finance our project. We had drawn the first blank and, to me, that seemed to mark the end of the road for our dream project; and for a while, that seemed to be the case. But Fred Musoke never lost hope. He joined hands with some of his colleagues in the department and decided to continue pursuing other options we had identified earlier. When Goretti Nassanga was on her PhD study leave, Monica Chibita, an MA in Journalism graduate of the University of Iowa stood in as Head of Department. One day in 2003, I was pleasantly surprised when the soft spoken Monica came to my office in the company of Alphonse Nkusi, one of the newer members of staff, wearing a beaming smile on her face to tell me that the Americans – through the American Centre in Kampala – had agreed to provide the funding for a training FM radio at Makerere. Like Monica, I could hardly contain my excitement. I hugged and thanked them for working so hard to find a donor for the project which I had almost given up on. I realised that for the first time, Makerere University would have its own campus-based radio station! Not many universities in sub-Saharan Africa had them. That was a dream come true.

My original idea was not to have a transmitter, but to use the radio like a closed circuit television, because I had not expected the American friends to provide one, but they did. All we needed to do was to apply to the Uganda Communication Commission (UCC) for a frequency in the already overcrowded Frequency Modulated band (or FM as it is popularly referred to). We were not too sure UCC would license a frequency in that band to us as that band was already over-used.

I envisaged that perhaps besides training journalists specialising the electronic media and broadcasting, we would be training Disc Jockeys (or DJs as they are popularly known in the trade) as well. The whole idea of a Makerere University FM Radio was one of those things I had remotely thought about in the past. It never occurred to me that the idea could be realised in my time. I remember referring to this achievement in one of my graduation speeches, shortly before I retired, with a lot of pride. As was usually the case, good things came with their own challenges. I was now faced with two requests. One was for space for the studios. The second was money to pay for the frequency. I had to move fast. That was the time my last contract was about to expire. As usual, when it came to matters of space allocation, I knew where to turn. I decided to throw the challenge to my Deputy, Professor Epelu Opio, the Chair of the Space Allocation Sub-Committee of Council. I asked them to find suitable premises to house the studios of the Mass Communication training radio station. I was expecting him to ask me in his characteristic way, “My boss, where can I find the space for the radio station studios?” On many occasions, he used to refer to me as boss. This time, that question never arose. I am sure he was equally excited about the prospects of Makerere having an FM radio. Soon, he found room in the Lincoln
The Experience and Recollections from the Faculties, Schools, Institutes and Centres

House, Flat B1. Subsequently, the equipment was delivered and fully installed. What remained now was to mount the transmitter on a mast. I do not quite recall who followed up the business with the UCC, but I remember later meeting Fredrick Musoke and asking him whether we had been granted a frequency, of which he responded in the affirmative, confirming that our application had been approved.

When Fredrick Musoke first discussed the idea of a Makerere radio, we also discussed the possible sites where we could hoist the transmitter if we ever got one. At the time, the Observatory Hill, the tallest peak on Makerere Hill was the obvious choice. However, that choice was overtaken by events. The South African Mobile Telephone Network (MTN) had approached the University Secretary, Mr Avitus Tebarimbasa, with a request to place a mast there at a negotiated annual fee. The MTN proposal had already been approved by the University Council. Professor Epelu Opio had mounted the transmitter for the university security radio there too. Meanwhile, Uganda Telecommunications Limited (UTL) had also negotiated with the Church of Uganda to use their portion of the hill for its mast. With all the water tanks and all these masts, the hill was overcrowded. Since the radio was basically a training facility and its target audience was first and foremost the Makerere community, we thought that mounting the transmitter on a slightly lower ground would still give the intended coverage a strong and quality signal. So, the choice was to mount the transmitter on top of overhead water tanks behind Lincoln House. Unfortunately, by the time all the installation and signal test work was completed, I was long gone. I missed the occasion when the former American Ambassador to Uganda and a former short-term student of Makerere at the time Idi Amin staged the coup in 1972, Jimmy Kolker, was invited by my successor, Professor Livingstone Luboobi, to inaugurate the radio station. With the radio station out of the way, the department presented us with another request; this time a studio for a closed-circuit television (CCTV). Again, with his usual efficiency, Professor Opio and his sub-committee identified one of those wooden bungalows on Pool Road, which Mrs Olivia Mutibwa had previously vacated, as the home for their training TV studios. Unfortunately, both of us left before the acquisition of the CCTV. If only the late Francis Kidubuka were alive, I am sure he would have been amazed and proud of the rapid progress the small unit Professor William Senteza Kajubi had asked him to start, as a part of the subjects in the Department of Literature in the early 1990s, was making. Dr Goretti Nassanga eventually completed her PhD, the first in Mass Communication at Makerere, and she was soon promoted to Senior Lecturer and confirmed as Head of Department. Kyazze-Simwogerere and Onapito Ekomoloi had completed their Masters degrees in the USA and returned. Kyazze went to New York; Onapito to the American University in Washington DC. Although at one point it looked like The Monitor newspaper had offered Kyazze-Simwogerere a fat job again on his return from the USA, after a stint at his old newspaper he had quit in the early 1990s, and decided to stick to Makerere.
After leaving The Monitor due to disagreements with management, Onapito and a few friends, including George W. Lugalambi – the paper’s editor – started a rival independent paper of their own – The Crusader – which they edited from an office on Kampala Road and at the same time taught at Makerere. The two were some of the first graduates of Mass Communication at Makerere. Onapito’s paper was on the news stand for a short time, but occasionally it carried terribly sensational and negative stories about the university. Sometimes, we wondered what the motives of writers were, especially since many of them were also full-time members of staff of the university. The paper vanished from the streets of Kampala as quickly as it had come. In 1996, Onapito was one of the members of staff who contested the parliamentary elections in his home District of Katakwi. Surprisingly, in spite of being a political rookie, he made it to the House and in the process earned himself the highly coveted title of “Honourable”. Later, President Museveni spotted his talent as a writer and appointed him his Press Secretary.

Peter Mwesigwa had performed impressively at the American University in Cairo, where he obtained his Masters degree before moving on to the University of Indiana at Bloomington, USA, for the PhD, with partial funding from the University’s Staff Development Fund. Monica Chibita too had started on her PhD at Makerere. While there were many older departments in the university that had never benefited from the Fulbright programme at Makerere, in its short existence, the Department of Mass Communication had had the privilege of hosting a Fulbright Fellow from the USA, Dr Jack. S. Smith, a specialist in electronic media.

Most of the young journalists working for the major newspapers and broadcasting houses in Uganda are Makerere Mass Communication graduates. Lillian Barenzi, who used to write a satirical column in The Sunday Vision, was a typical example. I have singled her out among the many for a special reason. We had to sort out a problem for her in her final year. Her problem bordered on sexual harassment and victimisation for non-cooperation, allegedly by a member of staff who also wrote critical articles about the university for The Crusader newspaper. The incident almost ruined her chances of obtaining her degree. Although nothing was conclusively proven, I was bemused to discover that the member of staff who was implicated in the scam, was also one of those who reported negatively on the university. I guess this was a typical example of self-glorifying individuals, who believed they were the angels of Makerere while the rest, particularly the administrators, were the devils who had to be crucified in the press. But as my good friend, late Dr Sam Mukasa used to say, “there are no angels in hell”.

If Makerere was hell as those members of staff had portrayed it in their columns and they were part of it, they were just as rotten as they presented it to be. If they did not know they were, then that must have been the worst form of self-deception. This member of staff was reprimanded and nearly lost his job. That also marked
the end of his critical writing about Makerere. That incident aside, I was pleasantly surprised when Sida of Sweden selected the department to coordinate a regional diploma course in Environmental Journalism and Communication, involving over nine countries in Africa. That was an achievement most certainly Francis Kidubuka would be proud of. I pray that in future when Makerere finally decides to honour some people by naming buildings, roads, departments, and other sites, after them, someone will remember to call the Mass Communication Department, or whatever else the department would have evolved into in the future, The Francis Kidubuka Department of Mass Communication or The Francis Kidubuka School of Journalism, as I had heard from corridor talk. I believe this will be a befitting honour in memory of his contribution for sowing the mustard seed and preserving the department's heritage. The success story of Makerere’s Department of Mass Communication prompted many old and new private universities around the country to start similar courses in Mass Communication.

It was equally a source of joy and pride to see progress in other departments in the Faculty of Arts as well. I recall being invited as Guest of Honour to an end-of-year staff party the faculty had organised on the front lawns of the Arts courtyard. Speech after speech, people were paying tribute to me and to the University Administration for facilitating the recovery of the faculty. I could not figure out what I had done to help the faculty turn things around, but I believe that late Dr Kasalina Byangwa Matovu, the linguist, had the right words when she said that I had provided them with the inspiring leadership they badly needed. They also thanked me for being a regular visitor to their faculty. It was true that I had visited the faculty several times before when Professor Ruth Mukama was still Dean. However, after thanking them for the compliments, which I thought I did not deserve, I had to remind them that it was not yet time to pop the champagne. The bottle had to remain on ice for a while, because the job had not yet been done. Their faculty was not yet problem free. There were still serious problems which needed fixing.

One of the nastiest incidents I had to handle as Vice Chancellor involved the dismissal of a Head of Department after the committee we had set up to investigate the alleged malpractices proved them to be true. To say the least, it was not only a despicable act, it was scandalous for a Head of Department to change the grades of a final year student from second class-upper division or 2.1 honours to a pass (or third class as it is called in some universities). I also found it hard to understand how a seasoned academic with a PhD from the University of California at Los Angeles, who had a promising career ahead of him, could decide to award first class honours marks to a mediocre script of a cousin. He changed the marks after the external examiner had looked at the script and had concurred with the internal examiner that indeed the student’s answers merited a second class-lower division (or 2.2 honours level). The first malpractice of
downgrading a female student’s degree class was driven by a vendetta. The second case involving upgrading the degree class of a relative was a question of blood being thicker than water. This experience, painful as it was, taught me the value of keeping records. We were able to unearth the scandal, because some members of staff and the external examiner had kept a record of the marks of every script they marked. Without that and other pieces of evidence, it would have been extremely difficult to get at the truth for the simple reason that the Head of Department had falsified the official mark sheets and had destroyed the student’s answer scripts. Confronted with the evidence, the Head of Department confessed to his misdeeds and pleaded for clemency. The case was a rude reminder of what I had heard so many times before. Over the years, I had heard students complain that members of staff in some departments were in the habit of under-marking their scripts. I used to dismiss it as sheer nonsense – students’ self-pity talk. I had convinced myself that no sane and self-respecting member of staff could ever indulge in such diabolical acts. This was the first time I came face-to-face with the stark reality. I then realised that students had a point, but up to a point, most of their complaints were exaggerations. Our further investigations clearly showed that what had happened in the Faculty of Arts was one of those isolated incidents. The student whose degree had been downgraded had her rightful degree reinstated and graduated with a BA, second class-upper division degree. The inflated first class marks were discarded and the old marks reinstated on the new official mark sheets. It was an episode that shook us to the bone.

The Department of Religious Studies at Makerere had over the years been recruiting priests as members of staff from both the Anglican and Catholic churches. In fact, most of these priests were quite learned with doctoral degrees in subjects like Theology, scriptures and so on. However, a few of them had long stopped practising their vocation and qualified to be referred to as ex-priests. Others had rebelled against their Bishops, and worse still some of the Catholic priests had forgotten their celibacy vows, and their Bishops had been forced to deflock them. I was tired of the never-ending squabbles so much so that in one of those rare moments, I was forced to dismiss a Head of Department, a priest who happened to be part of the group that was fuelling disharmony in the department. As a Head of Department, he was supposed to build unity and team spirit; but instead, he was busy dividing staff and stirring up trouble for everyone. Some of the priests even took us to court because we had refused to refund money they had spent when they were studying abroad, when in fact the university had never sanctioned such monies and their study leave. Our lawyers failed to attend court to defend the university. On that technicality, the judge ruled in their favour and we had to pay the damages.

The situation at the Department of Religious Studies stabilised only after we decided to appoint Sister Dr Teresa Tinkansimire as acting Head. She was
still in the junior ranks with little experience in administration and I was not sure she would manage those men; but in the circumstances, she was the best we had. To our amazement, she managed to restore order and sanity. The men stopped worrying. In fact, she succeeded beyond our expectations. Because she was not yet a Senior Lecturer, she could not be appointed substantive Head of Department. So we had to organise an election for a new head and prayed that whoever was elected would build on Sister Tinkansimire’s strong foundation. Father Dr S. Kabazi Kisirinnya won the elections and was appointed substantive Head of Department in 2002. Fortunately, he was a man of vision and continued to build the department. The days of squabbling were now behind us. Reverend Katahweire, the second Senior Lecturer in the department, had left for his PhD in the USA, which he completed a few years later. As a result of the unpleasant experience just mentioned, we advised the Appointments Board to mix the priests with lay young men and women, and to ensure a good balance between all three mainstream religions of Uganda. At first it was hard to find many Muslims with the requisite qualifications. Fortunately, Ambassador Badru Kateregga, the Vice Chancellor of Kampala University and an old member of staff of the department had completed his tour of duty as Uganda’s Ambassador to Saudi Arabia and was now back. He asked me whether he could be of any help to his old department on a part-time basis and after due consultations, I gave him an appointment as a part-time lecturer in Islamic Studies. It was a relief to the few young men there who were shouldering most of the teaching load in Islamic Studies.

Another crisis we had to handle at the Faculty of Arts involved an alleged loss of over USh800 million, the equivalent of about US$450,000. Professor Ndolerire, who was Dean at the time, discovered to his dismay that the faculty’s accounts were rapidly running into the red and if nothing was immediately done to arrest the situation, the faculty would completely run bankrupt. According to the budget for the year 2002 which the University Council had approved, the faculty was expected to have a surplus, which the Dean intended to set aside for a new building. He was now not sure what was happening to the money. Where was it going and who was taking it? At same time, rumours had started circulating in the faculty and beyond that a few members of staff in the Faculty Administration were engaging in corrupt practices and had to be exposed. In order to find answers to these questions and establish the truth, the faculty set up a committee to investigate what was going amiss, and if indeed there was something seriously wrong with the faculty accounts.

The Committee was chaired by Aloysius Kwitonda, a young man I had earlier appointed to act as Head of the Department of Literature when Ernest Okello Ogwang and Abbasi Kiyimba went on their PhD study leaves. After a week of intense work, the Committee submitted a report, which indicated that indeed Uganda Sh 800 million could not be accounted for. The more damning part of the report was the discovery that some members of staff had claimed double
teaching payments and other allowances. Indeed, to the unprofessed eye, the report made grim reading. The Dean was shocked and worried. It was the first financial malpractice to occur in the university in my time. However, the mistake the Dean had made was to set up a committee of inquiry into financial matters made up of people with no expert knowledge in accounting or auditing. The Dean’s committee had no accountant or auditor. In fact, later I asked the Dean why they did not enlist the services of Ben Byambabazi, the University Bursar or James Kabatangale, the University Internal Auditor. As we have seen before, at Makerere, nothing is secret. Before the Faculty Finance Committee had had time to discuss the report, someone had leaked it to the press and, typical of Uganda’s press, they went ahead and published it almost verbatim, flashing it on the front pages of some of the widely-read dailies. To the editors, it was a rare scoop, which made big headlines. The newspaper story made all of us really nervous. Not only was it an embarrassment to the University, it was worrisome. Makerere University had escaped such scandalous incidents involving financial impropriety for so long, was this going to be the first one? Professor Ndolerire too was baffled. He could not tell who had let the cat out of the bag. I had to remind him when he came to report the matter officially to me and hand me a copy of the report, that his faculty was training journalists. The journalist’s primary job was to look for newsworthy stories and events. His Committee of Inquiry report happened to be one of the newsworthy stories and someone there, who had access to it, leaked it to the press. For the newspaper which published it, it was the scoop of the week.

I wanted to double-check the accuracy of Kwitonda’s committee findings and how the committee arrived at the conclusion that such a huge sum of money had been misappropriated or taken out of the faculty’s bank account without anyone noticing. I needed some hard facts and figures before I could move in to fish out the culprits. After discussing the report Oswald Ndolerire had presented to me with my management team, we decided to send in the Internal Auditor, Mr Kabatangale, and a few of his staff to verify the figures presented in the report. We were not sure whether the audit report would confirm our worst fears or not, but that was secondary. After reading the Kwitonda’s report, I had the inkling at the back of mind that the findings were not quite accurate. Even from a non-expert like me, I could detect some contradictory figures, but I did not want my judgement to be biased. It was better to wait for Mr Kabatangale’s expert opinion, as he had worked as University Internal Auditor for as long as I could remember and had done more than a commendable job.

In the meantime, the story had become the talk of town, almost at the verge of becoming Makerere’s scandal of the year. I could not help worrying about the impact the story would have on our donors. Even the Minister of Education and Sports at the time, Dr Khidu Makubuya, had interest in the story. I remember him coming to the University one afternoon and finding me having a question-and-
answer session with the Dean – Ndolerire – in my office on some aspects of the report. The Minister, who came unannounced, was also looking for details and possibly answers about the unfolding and unprecedented financial scandal. Being an ex-Makererean and the Minister responsible for Makerere University's affairs, he was equally concerned. After all, there had been a myriad of allegations about corruption at Makerere, none of which had ever been proved. Was this the elusive smoking gun journalists and the likes had long been looking for? I was shocked when one of my secretaries – and I do not exactly remember whether it was Mary Seremba or Dorcas Muhirye – ushered in the Minister without warning me. He found me seated next to Professor Ndolerire, busy going through the report. He seemed happy that he found us handling the problem. We informed him that what we had was a document compiled by amateurs, adding that I had asked the Internal Auditor to cross-check it, and was waiting for confirmation from him. I promised to fill in the Minister with whatever data the Auditor would provide. I was almost certain that ever since the report became public, Professor Ndolerire was having lots of sleepless nights. It was potentially a huge scandal which could ruin his career and all he had achieved since becoming Dean of what was once described as a dying faculty.

Kabatangale was able to unravel what had happened and showed that actually most of the so-called missing money could not be accounted for, because the faculty had done sloppy accounting. However, he also established that members of staff in some departments had indulged in financial malpractices, including double dipping. But the amount involved was far less than the Uganda Sh800 million, which was alleged to have disappeared from the faculty's coffers. After establishing the facts, we had to deal with the members of staff who had made double claims. In his usual way, Ben Byambabazi could not wait to recover the money from their salaries. When I inquired further how members of staff got involved in the scam, they explained that the trick was to use a young member of staff such as a Teaching Assistant or a part-time lecturer to teach one class on their behalf, while they taught another class at the same time. Since Teaching Assistants or a part-time staff could not claim a teaching allowance, their names were not on the timetable to teach. The practice, therefore, was for the lecturers involved in the scam to make the claims in their names, and later share the money with the Teaching Assistant or the part-time member of staff, who actually did the teaching.

It was not so much that they were being paid for no work done, they were just driven by greed. Naturally, without knowing this background, you would assume that they were making double claims. However, there were a few dishonest claims, where some staff claimed and were paid teaching allowances when they had not taught. We reprimanded them and recovered the money they had fraudulently claimed. Oswald Ndolerire and his Associate Dean, Dr Hannington Sengendo, who also feared for the worst, weathered the storm and lived to tell the tale. It was a bitter lesson for all of us.
In his final report, James Kabatangale pointed out that most of what appeared to be money gone missing was genuine expenditure. The problem was that when the faculty drew up the budget, they grossly underestimated the number of members of staff who had to be paid. The calculations were based on much lower staff numbers than the actual figures on the ground. In addition, during the year, the faculty kept recruiting new staff who had not been budgeted for. In the end, it had overspent the staff emolument part of the budget and had even eaten deep into other budget items. That, according to the Internal Auditor, was the main course of the budget over-run. James Kabatangale had been able to reconcile the figures. However, the Kwitonda's committee findings on the double claims were correct. Unfortunately, that meant that there were no savings for the anticipated new building. Even what had been saved in the past was gone, swallowed by the escalating wage and allowance bill.

When the building project stalled, I became a liar. For a long time, I had been promising the Department of Music, Dance and Drama an appropriate home with a modern stage and orchestra put in place when the building was completed. Now the building was no more and I had no clue when the faculty would be in position again to resurrect the project. In fact, during the several discussions I had with Oswald Ndolerire about the proposal for a new building, we had tentatively agreed to reserve the entire ground floor, equipped with a modern theatre with a sitting capacity of 500-plus for the exclusive use of the Department of Music, Dance and Drama. This would have pleased Dr Justin Tamusuza, the man who had been hard on my heels, constantly reminding me of the sorry state his department was in. Much as it was a relatively small department, he thought it deserved a more befitting home than the two old colonial bungalows that housed it. We had even thought of generating some income for the department and faculty by opening up the theatre to the public, but after the faculty's financial problems, most members of staff were opposed to the idea of saving again for the project. They wanted all the income the faculty was generating to go to their welfare and for hiring more staff to teach the big classes. At the time, the Faculty of Arts was employing the largest number of part-time lecturers and it was paying the majority of them from its own resources. No doubt, this was a big burden on the faculty's finances. We had to shelve the project for the future, when the financial situation improved.

In spite of this incident, all was not totally doom and gloom. The Faculty that had almost been pronounced dead was somehow back on its feet. Professor Ndolerire had taken over the deanship of the faculty from the long-serving Professor Byaruhanga Akiiki, a member of the Department of Religious Studies. Before him, Dr Ruth Mukama had served as Dean for a while until she left for the University of California. In fact, her promotion to full Professor was announced when she was still in the USA. Before being elected Dean in 1995, Dr Ndolerire
had served as Director of the Institute of Languages. He was then a Senior Lecturer. Interestingly, he successfully managed to combine administration with his academic work. In a relatively short time, he had accumulated enough publications for promotion, first to Associate Professor and then to full Professor. A soft spoken man, with no airs about him, he was one of the high achievers of my time. Once again, the Faculty of Arts became attractive to students. As a result, the student population kept rising. Under his leadership, the faculty came up with several new programmes; the evening BA was one of them. Until then, the faculty was not offering evening classes. The evening programme was an instant success. Initially, some members of staff were sceptical whether there would be students willing to pay for the course. Against all odds, the programme attracted many and the old faculty never looked back. The highly competitive BA Mass Communication was also now available in the evenings. Even the name of the degree changed to Bachelor of Mass Communication, shortened as BMass Comm which was more appealing. As we have already noted, besides the BA in Mass Communication which started in the early 1990s, the faculty had not initiated new programmes. Building on its success story, the faculty started introducing new and more exciting programmes. As Uganda's tourism fortunes were being revived, the faculty came up with a proposal to start a three-year Bachelor of Tourism Degree (or BTM for short), which was initially offered as an evening programme in the Department of Geography. It was followed by the Bachelor of Arts in Environmental Management (BAEM), also as an evening programme based in the Department of Geography. A few years later, Senate and the University Council decided that the two degrees would also be offered as day programmes. Originally, the faculty had decided not to duplicate these new programmes, but Government-sponsored students who were the majority of the day scholars, exerted pressure on the University to have them offered as day programmes as well. They convincingly argued that they were missing out on the more lucrative programmes. This presented its own problems. Since the programmes were being offered during the day and in the evenings, some smart day students started missing lectures to engage in whatever they pleased. They would then turn up in the evenings to take lectures with the evening students. The evening lecturers began to complain about excessive overcrowding, which was unusual. This was largely the result of the truant day students. Indeed, human beings are skilful at identifying opportunities and exploiting them to their advantage.

Meanwhile, the two new programmes seemed to have triggered a chain reaction in the entire faculty. It was like the faculty had suddenly re-invented itself and had gone into frenzy for new programmes. Not wishing to be left behind, every department was now introducing new programmes in the hope that they would appeal to students. In the process, conflicts with other Faculties which had reason to believe that the Faculty of Arts was encroaching on their mandates were inevitable. Bachelor of Environmental Management was one such programme. The Institute of Environment and Natural Resources (MUINER)
had contested, arguing that it was its mandate to offer courses on anything to do
with the environment. Dr David Matovu and his Council strongly believed in
the dictum that innovation should not be killed simply because of mandates. The
University Council argued that as long as a department was able to demonstrate
it had the capacity to execute a particular programme, it should be allowed to do
so. This line of reasoning helped to take the sting out of the mandate debate, but
not before a showdown between the Faculty of Commerce and the Faculty of Arts
in Senate. While the former, the Faculty of Commerce, was preoccupied with just
two-degree programmes – the BCom and the BBA, the Faculty of Arts pulled a fast
move on them by proposing to offer a new degree programme in Management.
“Over our dead bodies”, was the immediate reaction from the alarmed Dean of
the Faculty of Commerce, Waswa Balunywa. The Faculty of Arts had neither the
right nor the capacity to offer a course in Management. Management was the
preserve of the Faculty of Commerce. In fact, Commerce put up a spirited fight
to keep the Faculty of Arts off the Management course. In order to maintain
harmony, Senate looked for a compromise. Instead of Management, the Faculty
of Arts was advised to re-label its programme. There was also the option for
the two Faculties to offer a joint course in Management, but Commerce would
not buy into it. It would not go into a joint venture with Arts on something
that was squarely its own. Finally, the Faculty of Arts settled for Organisational
Studies, offered not as a full blown degree of its own, but as a subject in the BA
programme. But that was not the last of the controversies the Faculty would stir
up in Senate. If anything, its members appeared to be increasingly immune to
controversy. They were least perturbed by the accusations that the Faculty of Arts
was stepping on other people’s toes. The next punch would come from Dr James
Sengendo, then Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, when the Faculty of Arts
submitted a proposal to Senate to mount a degree programme in Development
Studies at the Department of History.

Development Studies had a bit of history. When the NRM Government came
to power in 1986, it requested Makerere University to start a special programme
in Development Studies, more or less along the University of Dar es Salaam
model. The Faculty of Social Sciences had been designated as the home for the
programme. However, the University had grown cold feet over the idea. Rightly
or wrongly at the time, Development Studies along the lines of the University
of Dar es Salaam was perceived by many as a Marxist-oriented ideological
indoctrination. As a prelude to the launch of the programme, some people had
been sent to the University of Dar es Salaam to train and return to Makerere to
teach on the programme. The programme did not take off and the idea seemed
to have died a natural death. Here was Ndolerire and his madly ambitious faculty
reviving a dead programme. He was not only reviving it, he was also taking it
to the wrong faculty. For a while, a clash between James Sengendo and Oswald
Ndolerire was looming. Fortunately, by the time the proposal had gone through
Senate, the two faculties had somehow reconciled their differences. Much as Social Sciences believed it was the legitimate faculty to host the course, their proposal document had not been even written. In recommending and approving the new programme, both Senate and the University Council argued that, given the multi and inter-disciplinary nature of the Development Studies, any of the two Faculties could offer it and staff from both faculties could teach on it. Since the Faculty of Arts’ proposal was ready, it was granted the permission to mount it in the Department of History. The Development Studies degree programme had nothing to do with the so-called indoctrination. However, that was not the end of new programmes from the faculty, more were on the cards.

In Uganda, the secretarial profession, much like Nursing, was traditionally a non-degree course. In the 1970s, Makerere University employed graduate secretaries, but their degrees were not in Secretarial Studies. These graduate secretaries were young graduate women mainly with a BA degree, whom the university had recruited as Administrative Assistants. However, when the need arose to have some high-calibre secretaries in the University Administration, these young women were sent to the then Uganda College of Commerce at Nakawa to be trained as secretaries. Over time, the university phased out this grade of secretaries. Most of the graduate secretaries who were still in the university service took on other roles. I do not recall who in the Faculty of Arts conceived the idea of a degree programme in Secretarial Studies. At the time, ITEK was the only institution in the country which offered a degree course for teachers of Secretarial Studies in the Department of Business Education. The Faculty of Arts wanted to start one if it had its way.

Once again, trouble was on the horizon. The Faculty of Commerce, which had transferred to Nakawa to merge with the National College of Business Studies, a non-degree awarding institution, to form Makerere University Business School was immediately up in arms again. This, as the Business School interpreted it, was another provocative act from the Faculty of Arts which had to be resisted. The Principal of the School was quick to point out that the mandate to train secretaries at all levels lay with the new Business School, and not with any other faculty. The Faculty of Arts had nothing to do with such specialised professional courses and, in any case, the Faculty of Arts did not have the capacity to teach such technical courses at degree level.

Frankly, after the Management programme experience, I was nervous about this new course. I also doubted if the Faculty of Arts had the capacity to teach such a specialised course. When Professor Ndolerire intimated to me that they were writing a proposal document to start a degree in Secretarial Studies, I was uneasy and concerned. Like my friends at Nakawa, I also believed that this time the Faculty of Arts had gone a bit too far. However, Professor Ndolerire and his ambitious colleagues were undeterred. They were ready to demonstrate to all
sceptics that indeed the faculty had the capacity to teach the course. Apparently, they were more determined than ever before to break with tradition. It was time to breathe new life in the faculty and they were not going to do it by sticking to traditional BA degree. They pointed out that something might have been missed in the whole debate. Although the students had to be well grounded in the traditional secretarial skills, such as typing and shorthand, the Secretarial Studies course was about new and non-traditional skills, such as communication and language skills, which a modern secretary must have. After all, with ICT, bosses were now doing most of their typing on their computers; therefore the role of the secretary was changing. The arguments were convincing enough for the new course to go through the approval process without much ado, first as a subject in the BA degree programme and later as full-fledged Bachelor of Secretarial Studies (or BSES) degree programme based in the Institute of Languages. This time the Business School did not have its way.

The Department of Geography under the leadership of Dr Hannington Sengendo, a PhD graduate of the University of Nottingham in the UK, was one of the prime movers in the quest for new and more labour market-oriented programmes. The Department had thought long and hard about its survival and the survival of the Faculty of Arts as a whole. If they failed to inject new ideas into their academic programmes, the road to slow death would be the inevitable eventuality. To the geographers, there was more to Geography than its traditional confines. Geography was a key element in many applied and professional disciplines, so why not exploit those new and emerging Geography-related disciplines. As we have seen, Tourism and Environmental Management were the first to come on board, but there was still another unexploited discipline – Urban Planning. Traditionally, many Makerere Geography graduates ended up as urban planners in such places as Kampala City Council and other town councils, but these geographers did not have the specialised training in urban planning when they were students at the University. The mushrooming urban authorities in the country had clearly demonstrated that there was a demand for professional urban planners. The department wanted to put the ideas to the test by starting a new degree in Urban Planning. Initially, the Bachelor of Urban Planning, which started in the 1997/98 academic year, was offered as an evening private programme, but later it was also offered during the day. With all these new degree and non-degree programmes, the Arts Courts had once again become a hive of intense academic activity.

It was an incredible experience to see a faculty which was at the brink of death bounce back to life in such a short time. That was a clear demonstration of the role good and imaginative leadership plays in institutional development. Professor Oswald Ndolerire had demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt that he was such a leader. By the time I left Makerere, the range of new and interesting courses on offer was not only impressive, but also bewildering. For instance, for a
long time people thought the Faculty of Arts had nothing to do with computers. That was about to change. The faculty was not about to lag behind in the new technologies which were sweeping across the world. Using its own resources, the faculty set up an impressive and well-stocked computer laboratory for use by both staff and students. Departments and members of staff also acquired computers of their own. This happened at the time the University was embracing the arrival of the Internet and e-mail services as a means of information sourcing and communication.

Secondly, the Department of Music, Dance and Drama ran only one programme, which was a Diploma in Music, Dance and Drama. A few Literature students also used to study Drama as part of their degree. That was about all the department offered, but change was on the way coming. As we have seen elsewhere in this account, by 2000 the department had been in existence for close to four decades. Many distinguished musicians like Moses Serwadda, one of the founding members of staff who Frank Kalimuzo former Vice Chancellor (now deceased) sent to the University of Ghana at Legon as a staff development fellow to study African Music in the early 1970s, Father Dr Anthony Okello and Mr George Kakoma, the Uganda national anthem composer, late Erivania Zirimu, late Rose Mbowa, as well as renowned traditional musicians like late Sempeke, had taught at the department. Over the years, the department had trained outstanding students who became successful playwrights and actors. Names such as Abbey Mukiibi, now working with the Central Broadcasting Service (CBS, or Radio Buganda as it is popularly known) come to mind. Throughout that period, the department had no degree programme, and yet the demand was there. However, that had to wait until the return of Dr Justinian Tamusuza from Northwestern University in the USA, where he obtained a PhD in Music and his wife, Naloongo Silvia Nannyonga, with a PhD from the University of Pittsburgh in the USA. Although the department had yet to find more decent buildings, this did not stop Dr Tamusuza and his colleagues from thinking big. Time had come to move on to more advanced things beyond the diploma. They quickly came up with three new degree programmes: Bachelor of Music, Bachelor of Drama and Bachelor of Dance. The degree programmes would run alongside the old Diploma in Music, Dance and Drama, because there was still demand for it. It seemed the revolution was unstoppable. It was also a source of joy for me to see Mercy Mirembe Ntangaare receive her PhD at Makerere in October 2001 when the University did not have a Chancellor. When Dr Tamusuza stepped down as Head of Department, she took over. When I granted the three of them study leave in the latter part of the 1990s, it did not occur to me that I would still be there to welcome them back with their PhDs. Now the department had three PhD holders on its staff list. While Tamusuza was on study leave in the USA, a young Lecturer, Dan Kisense, acted as Head of Department. Now that Tamusuza was back, it was time for the young Lecturer, who had held the fort to go for
his PhD too, in Australia. If he and Jessica Kaahwa completed their PhDs and returned, there would be five, out of a staff of thirteen, with PhD degrees.

Meanwhile, Dr Tamusuza was busy teaching, initiating new programmes and publishing. Sometimes my colleagues amazed me how they combined their heavy teaching loads and administration with research and publishing good papers. Justin Tamusuza was one of those who managed quite successfully. It did not take him long to go up the academic ladder. Soon after his return from Northwestern, he applied for promotion to Associate Professor and, on the basis of his good publications, he was promoted. With Rose Mbowa, the department was now boasting of two Associate Professors. One of the younger members of staff who made the grade to Senior Lecturer was J. Mangeni.

The Faculty of Arts was now truly on the march forward. Gone are the days when staff in some departments in the faculty far outnumbered students. Now everyone had a full load. The Department of Mass Communication was now offering courses in Public Relations, Print Media, Photo Journalism and Broadcasting as part of the Bachelor of Mass Communication, when originally the emphasis was on Print Media/Journalism. Students could also study Mass Communication as a subject in the BA degree course. Besides the traditional BA in the 3.1.1 and 3.2.2 combinations, the Department of History now had Organisational Studies and the Bachelor of Development Studies. Geography had Geography as a BA course in the traditional 3.1.1 and 3.2.2 combinations, Environmental Management also as both a BA subject and the Bachelor of Environmental Management, Tourism as a subject in the traditional BA course and as Bachelor of Tourism Degree, as well as Bachelor of Urban Planning. The Institute of Languages had English Language Studies, Linguistics, Kiswahili for beginners, advanced Kiswahili, French for beginners, Advanced French, German for beginners and for advanced students, Luganda for both beginners and advanced students, Runyakitara, which was actually a combination of most of the Bantu Languages spoken in Western Uganda (Runyoro, Rutooro, Runyankole and Rukyiga), Luo for beginners and at advanced level. Runyakitara and Luo were two new local languages introduced in the institute during the latter part of my time as Vice Chancellor. In spite of the two languages being widely spoken in Uganda, they had never been taught at Makerere. I remember a little discussion I once had with Jane Alowo, wondering when the institute could ever start teaching Luo and Ateso on one of those occasions I visited the Institute of Languages in my earlier years as Vice Chancellor. Then, she was not sure when they could start, but promised to take it up, which she did, but Ateso had to wait. Written literature, books and teachers was one of the issues. Besides that discussion, I also recall arguing with her about the spelling of the word Luo. Should it be spelt Luo or Lwo? I had never seen the word spelt as Lwo, but she convinced me that Lwo was the correct spelling. Then our discussion drifted to many other of
Uganda’s indigenous languages. I was informed that the main reason they were not yet taught was because of difficulty in finding enough written material for many local languages and lack of lecturers capable of teaching most of our local languages at the university level, which I thought was rather unfortunate. Besides the old and new languages, the institute also offered Secretarial Studies in the BA degree programme, a Bachelor of Secretarial Studies, Communications Skills and Social Anthropology, which was also at the centre of controversy between Arts and Social Sciences.

The faculty’s list of new postgraduate programmes was even more impressive: Postgraduate Diplomas in Mass Communication, Translation and Interpretation, Meteorology, and Environmental Journalism; Master of Arts in Land Use and Regional Development, Ethics and Public Management offered in the Department of Philosophy, Human Rights also in Philosophy, and Music, Dance and Drama – the first ever graduate programme in the Department of Music Dance and Drama. Other Masters degree programmes were in African Languages, Peace and Conflict Management also in Philosophy. The faculty also had PhD programmes in all departments. I have endeavoured to give a list of new programmes which the Faculty of Arts developed in the ten years I was there as Vice Chancellor, to illustrate an important point which was the centre-piece of our administration: reform, transform and modernise. The Faculty of Arts is one of the best examples of this philosophy. You could call it the piece de resistance of my times. It was also a pleasure to see some of the prominent Ugandans who made the department tick before disaster struck in the 1971, return. Austin Bukenya was one of such people. He returned after several years of self-imposed exile at Kenyatta University in Kenya. One of the most brilliant boys Namlyango College has ever produced, he went on to study Literature and French at the University of Dar es Salaam in the mid-1960s, graduating with first class honours, the first student to achieve it in the two subjects at Dar es Salaam. He returned to Uganda and joined the Department of Literature, but had to flee for his safety during the staff exodus of the 1970s, after the brutal murder of members of staff, including the celebrated Pio Zirimu and Byron Kawadwa, one of Uganda’s best playwrights. Professor Peter Tibenderana, who had spent most of his exile days in Nigeria, where he obtained his PhD in History at the University of Ibadan and was teaching at Ahmed Bello University, was another Ugandan who returned home and joined the University’s academic staff. Dr James Muliiira, who also returned to the Department of History, had spent his exile days teaching at the University of Nairobi. We also welcomed back Dr C. P. Emudong, who was in Swaziland during the years of turmoil. He too joined the Department of History. Dr K. B. Kiingi, the lexicographer, who had also spent years at Kenyatta University and Dr John Kalema, who once headed the Organisation of African Unity Language Bureaux in the 1970s, which was then based in Kampala, also made it home and joined the young Institute of Languages.
By the time I left Makerere, Dr Kalema had taken over from Dr Manuel Muranga as Director of the Institute. Professors Matia Semakula-Kiwanuka, the late Samwiri Karugire, Pheres Mutibwa, Livingstone Walusimbi and Ruganda, once considered the Faculty of Arts giants and icons in the ’60s and ’70s, were around, but were giving way to a new breed of scholars. Even Victoria Mwaka, who had earned her PhD in the tough times of the ’70s under the late famous Professor Langlands – one of the few British nationals who had defied Idi Amin’s orders to leave the country in 1972 – the youngest member of staff to have headed the Department of Geography, was long gone. Victoria scored a double first; being the first woman Professor of Geography at Makerere and the first Head of Geography. By the time she took over the headship of the department, she was one of the youngest members of staff in the faculty. However, it was equally sad to lose Dr Kasalina Matovu, who had served as Associate Dean to Professor Ndolerire and who, after going through a lot of difficulties, which included change of supervisors, had obtained her PhD in Linguistics at Makerere in 1994; as well as the soft-spoken Rose Mbowa. These were two of the best women the faculty had at the time. While the faculty mourned some of its best, it was equally gratifying to see several members of staff get their PhDs at Makerere. People like Ephraim Kamuhangire of the History Department in 1996; James Kigongo of Philosophy also in 1996, but who the faculty almost lost due to a serious illness; Edward Wamala also of Philosophy in 1998; Paddy Musana in 2001, and many more. Scholarship was slow, but surely returning to this once renowned faculty.

After Professor Nelson Sewankambo of the Medical School, Professor Oswald Ndolerire was the second Dean in the University to have had two deputies: Dr Hannington Sengendo and Dr Edith Natukunda-Togboa, who replaced the late Kasalina Matovu. When he stepped down in 2003, after eight years as Dean he had reason to feel good about his achievements in spite of the occasional ups and down. As we did not want to lose his immense leadership talent, we had to find a way of putting it to better use. His stepping down as Dean coincided with the opening of the regional African Institute for Capacity Development (AICAD), with the support of the three Governments of East Africa and the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), next to the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology at Juja, Nairobi. The institute was supposed to open offices in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. The branch office in Uganda was based at the Makerere University. We were now searching for a suitable Country Director to run the institute’s office at Makerere. Fortunately, we did not have to look very far. Oswald was now relatively free and available. We decided to give him the opportunity to head the AICAD office as Country Director for Uganda. It was not a full-time appointment and the position did not carry a salary. It was more or less an honorary position. In the meantime, the faculty had to elect a new Dean. After a hotly contested election, Dr Hannington Sengendo emerged winner, and became the faculty’s new Dean in 2003, with Dr Abbasi Kiyimba
of the Literature Department, who at the time had completed his PhD at the University of Dar es Salaam on Makerere University scholarship, as one of his deputies. The big lesson for me in all this was the reconfirmation of the old adage, which says that “where there is a will, there is always a way”. The Faculty of Arts had clearly demonstrated that with visionary and innovative leadership, determination and perhaps a dose of zeal, it can be done. That is what I call thinking outside the box.

Faculty of Social Sciences: The Shrinking Faculty – Oratory and Satire

The Faculty of Social Sciences was one of the few faculties at Makerere to have had a woman as Dean during my time, when Dr Joy Kweå‘iga was elected in 1997. It is interesting to note that Dr Kweå‘iga did not start out as an academic, but as an administrator at the Academic Registrar’s Department, where she had been an Assistant Registrar and was later promoted to Senior Assistant Registrar. She had risen through the ranks, from graduate secretary into administration. Although soft-spoken, she was a woman of determination. After many years in administration, she decided to go back to school, combining her tight work schedule with an equally demanding study programme, at a time when full-time paid study leave was unheard of at Makerere. If you chose to study while on the job, you either forfeited your salary and the university accommodation you occupied or you studied in your free time. It was also rare for staff in administration to aspire for a PhD. To most, a Masters degree was sufficient for your job security. There were also many in administration who never bothered to go beyond their first degrees, because a Masters degree was not a mandatory requirement for a job in the university administration. Whatever inspired Joy Kweå‘iga to consider studying for a Masters and a PhD afterwards, in my judgement was a wise decision.

After her PhD in Gender and Education at the University of London, she left administration for an academic career, which was full of uncertainties. Progress through the academic ranks is totally dependent on one’s ability to do research and translate the research results into publications in reviewed journals or to present them at high profile academic conferences, where they are published as conference proceedings. Even when the publications are of the right quantity and quality, they still must be subjected to an external vetting process before one can be promoted from one rank to the next. Joy Kweå‘iga was undeterred by such prospects; she had not joined the University’s academic staff to stagnate. Although she had been a Senior Assistant Registrar before she switched careers, that did not count in her new job. She had to start at the bottom of the ladder all over again as a Lecturer in the Department of Women Studies. To many, that would have been regression, but to her that was immaterial. She quickly rose through the ranks, becoming an Associate Professor by the time I left in 2004. Before she
was elected Dean, she had been the Head of the Department of Women Studies since 1996 when Professor Victoria Mwaka, the founding head left the University for a career in politics. As an incoming Dean, she was taking over from James Sengendo, one of the most successful Deans I worked with.

It seemed that before she decided to make a bid for the office of Dean, she had done her homework carefully. She was determined to make a success on both fronts, as an academic and administrator. She sailed through the elections with no difficulty. But she surprised me when soon after her election as the new Dean, she came to ask for a one-year sabbatical to take up a Fulbright fellowship at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. It was not the sort of request a newly elected Dean would make. I nearly rejected her application. I wondered why she had bothered to stand for the office when she knew she would be going away in less than a year, but she had a good reason to go. Here was an opportunity of a lifetime for her to go and publish more papers while in the USA. I was not about to deny her that opportunity. Being an academic was far more important than being a dean. She was fortunate to have had resourceful and hardworking Dr Charles Rwabukwali as her Deputy Dean. For the year she was in the USA, Charles Rwabukwali shouldered the responsibility of running the Dean’s Office and he did it in an exemplary way.

One of the reasons I have devoted all this space to Dr Joyce Kwesiga is because she was among the many people I was privileged to work with who exhibited qualities I rarely found in others. She came across as a courageous and resolute person. I found her a woman of very strong convictions. She believed in the elimination of injustice and discrimination of all sorts which society was meting out to women, many of whom who did not have a voice or the means to hit back. To her, gender took on another dimension. It became a passion and a personal crusade. She believed in her cause and expressed her convictions with candour. You either liked what she stood for or hated her for it. I have no doubt that it was through the efforts of people like her that some of us began to take gender seriously. Although not all was put in practice before I left, it made Makerere University one of the most gender-sensitive institutions of higher learning in Africa. In fact, when we created a Gender Mainstreaming Division in the Office of the Academic Registrar, headed by a Deputy Registrar, she gave up the deanship of the Faculty of Social Sciences and settled for a position lower in rank. Actually, she made another piece of history for herself by becoming the first head of this new Division in the Academic Registrar’s office.

When Professor George Kirya was Vice Chancellor, the idea of establishing a Department of Women Studies at Makerere, which a few years later changed to the Women and Gender Studies, was first discussed during the Donors Conference of 1987. Although Professor Kirya did not stay long enough to see this unique department start, his successor, Professor William Senteza Kajubi, did everything
possible to get it off the ground. The challenge to start the Department of Women Studies was thrown to Victoria Mwaka. I am sure many people at Makerere at the time did not quite know what Women Studies was all about. However, Professor Mwaka and a handful of other members of staff drew on their vast experience and managed to draw up a syllabus for a Master of Arts in Women Studies, the first of its kind in East Africa, and launched it in the 1991/92 academic year. At the time, when this young department did not even have a proper building, it opened its doors to its first batch of students. The difficult beginning did not dampen Victoria Mwaka’s determination to get the department started. It was a success story which I am sure went beyond even her own expectations. The Swedish Research Agency (SAREC), which later merged with Sida to become Sida/SAREC, was one of the department’s first donors. SAREC made generous grants to the department in its earlier years, which made it possible for the MA in Women Studies programme to get off to a good start. The African American Institute had also shown a lot of interest in the department, but the expected support never materialised. Sadly, in 1995 the department lost its founding head, Professor Victoria Mwaka, when she was appointed Deputy Chairperson of the Constituent Assembly. By then Dr Joy Kwesiga had joined the department as a lecturer and was the most experienced among all members of staff the department had at the time. So, when Professor Mwaka left, we asked Dr Joyce Kwesiga to take over as head, initially in an acting capacity. Later the Appointments Board confirmed her as substantive head for a three-year term. The change-over from Victoria Mwaka to Joy Kwesiga was controversial. Professor Mwaka was expected to return to the university after the Constituent Assembly’s work was completed, so there were some staff members who thought we had hastily replaced her. However, Professor Mwaka didn’t come back; instead, she decided to try her luck in politics. She was one of the members of staff of the university who contested in the general election of 1996, and was elected Member of Parliament. That ended what perhaps would have been a nasty leadership wrangle in the department.

Professor Mwaka left when the department was still struggling for space. Due to the lack of resources for a new building, the university administration decided to give the young department an old tin-roofed bungalow on Pool Road, which had been the residence of the former Deputy University Secretary in charge of the Project Implementation Unit, Sam Byanagwa. It was a small house which could not adequately accommodate the expanding teaching staff and increasing student numbers, but that was all there was at the time. Interestingly, just about the same time the department recruited its first male member of staff, Mr Henry Manyire. Dr Deborah Kasente, the former Warden of Mary Stuart Hall, who had now obtained a PhD from Kenyatta University, Dr Consolata Kabonesa, who once worked at the United States Information Service in Kampala and May Sengendo, who had an MA from the University of Nottingham, and formerly a teacher at the Makerere College School, had also joined the department as lecturers. Soon
after, Dr Grace Kyomuhendo Bantebya, who had returned after obtaining an MPhil from the University of Cambridge and a PhD from the University of Hull also joined the department’s teaching staff.

Besides the donors, the young department also started attracting foreign scholars quite early. Dr Margaret Snyder, a Fulbright scholar from the USA was one of them. Without a doubt, her two or so years at Makerere University were productive years for her and for the department. Her presence boosted the image of the department. She was also a prolific writer and published an interesting book on the role of women in development from her research. She returned to the USA when her Fulbright fellowship ended, but she came back in July 2002 to help the department organise the International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women – the Women’s World 2002. Besides Dr Snyder, I was pleasantly surprised to hear of another American scholar who was interested in spending some time in the new department. What amazed me even more was the fact that, in her application, she had said that she was sponsoring herself. She just wanted the University to provide her with accommodation. However, being the first time to receive an application from a self-sponsored scholar, I had doubts initially whether she could afford it. It was by any stretch of imagination an expensive undertaking. Apparently, she was serious and determined to come to Makerere and the department was interested in her too.

Professor Justin Epelu Opio was able to identify suitable accommodation for her in the EEC flats opposite the School of Education. At about the same time, two other scholars – Drs Bishop and Rosemary McNair, both Canadians – also joined the young department. The Commonwealth Secretariat provided the funding that made it possible for them to come to Makerere. During the rapid leadership changes which the department went through after the departure of Dr Victoria Mwaka, Dr Rosemary McNair ended up temporarily acting as Head of Department before Joy Kwesiga took over.

As we shall see later, in late 1998, we began negotiating with the Norwegian Agency for International Development (NORAD) for the largest grant Makerere University had ever received from the Kingdom of Norway. The grant was being negotiated to finance a four-year Institutional Development Programme (IDP). It was not surprising that after years of neglect, the list of the university’s needs was long. Among the many priorities we presented to NORAD was a new building for the Department of Women Studies. However, when all priorities were costed, the bill came to a staggering NOK 220 million, equivalent to US$30 million. We knew that NORAD would not approve such a huge grant for a single institution. So on the advice of our consultant, we scaled down the list of priorities to what we thought was a realistic figure that the NORAD Board was likely to approve. We had to cut out many genuinely worthy projects. Much as gender was uppermost on the university’s priority list, we did not believe that NORAD would consider
providing funds for a building for the Department of Women Studies. In fact, we were seriously considering eliminating it from the final project proposal document which we were due to submit to NORAD, but Dr McNair, who was then acting as Head of Department insisted that their project remained on the final list of proposals going to NORAD. I remember her warning us in one of the Task Force meetings that we risked having the entire proposal rejected by the NORAD Board if we went ahead with our plan to strike their project off the final list. I thought she was attempting to blackmail us, but apparently she knew the Norwegians better than anyone of us. She seemed to have some inside information about NORAD’s stand on gender and women issues and, as we were to discover later, in Scandinavia, gender matters. We chose to go along with her suggestion and left the building in the grant proposal document. She was right: NORAD did not hesitate to approve the building project.

The proposal for a building for the Department of Women Studies was not entirely a new idea. Since 1991, my predecessors had been thinking seriously of constructing a befitting building for the department, but funds were the major handicap. As part of the fundraising drive, the department commissioned TECO to prepare preliminary drawings and bills of quantities. That was where it ended. When it became clear that the former First Lady of the USA, Mrs Hilary Rodham Clinton, would visit Makerere University in March 1998, the opportunity was not lost on the department. Shortly before her visit, Dr Joy Kwesiga and a few of her colleagues came to my office with an architectural model of their proposed building. They had come to ask me to present it to Mrs Clinton, requesting her to help them raise funds for their building. Much as their request made sense, I really had difficulty presenting it. How could I present the model to Mrs Clinton without the permission of her security personnel? After satisfying her security personnel that the model was harmless and, therefore, posed no security risk, I presented it to her during a meeting I had with her in my office. Although the idea impressed her, she made no commitments.

Naturally, we were disappointed and I almost lost hope of ever being able to find money for the Women Studies Department until opportunity struck again with NORAD. Although my Norwegian friends had promised to provide funds for a building, the grant finally allocated to the Department of Women Studies was only enough for a two-storey building. According to the new University Council regulations, any new building within the Ring Road had to have a minimum of three storeys. The choice was either to forget about the building project and ask NORAD to allocate the money to other projects – an idea I thought could have hardly pleased the staff who had worked so hard to put the NORAD proposal together – or raise funds from other sources and put up a building with at least three floors to satisfy the University Council regulation. We also knew that the department was in the midst of preparations for hosting a huge international
conference, which was due in a year or two. Certainly, this made the need for a new and more befitting building for the department that much more urgent. The colonial bungalow on Pool Road was too old and getting dilapidated, there was therefore no way the building project could be stopped. We also took into account the effect it would have had on staff morale. The question was how to raise the extra money for the third floor.

Our weekly management meetings had become problem-solving sessions. Funding the third floor of the Women Studies Department’s building was one of them. After some number crunching with the architects and an in-depth analysis of the university’s finances, we were convinced we could afford to pay for the extra floor from the internally generated income. The building could now go ahead as originally designed. Next was to sell our idea to the University Council through its Estates and Works Committee. Without hesitation, the council agreed to match up additional money for the third floor. It was the first time for the University Council to use its resources to co-finance a project with a donor. Although co-financing the project with NORAD was an excellent idea and a novelty at the time, it was not without its problems. Through an oversight or over-zealousness, we had overlooked some critical factors in our calculations, namely, the cash flow from the internally generated revenue. As the work progressed, it became increasingly clear that the University Bursar would not be able to raise the money in time to meet the council’s contribution to the project. The revenue from fees and other sources trickled in, with it the competing demands, stretching the university’s capacity to meet its financial obligations. Sadly, and at the risk of embarrassing the University Council and NORAD, we could not raise the money promptly to pay the contractor undertaking the job. In all fairness, the contractor had completed the job on schedule, slightly under a year. The site was handed over to him in April 2001 and by March 2002, he was ready to hand over the new building. At this stage, we could only pay the NORAD contribution.

Fortunately for us, the contractor was considerate. He waited patiently for his overdue payment. Although the Bursar eventually raised all the money and paid off the contractor, the episode embarrassed the University Council and made us rethink the whole idea of co-financing donor-funded projects. To avoid such embarrassing situations in future, the University Council decided to cancel the policy on co-financing. The setback notwithstanding, we had finally provided the Department of Women Studies with an ultra-modern three-storey building on the site where the old bungalow once stood – 1740 square metres, at a cost of UgSh 1.1 billion, equivalent to US$600,000 at the time. The department could now boast of a befitting home on Pool Road, alongside the newer buildings belonging to the Economic Policy Research Centre and the Institute of Economics. Rosemary McNair’s insistence on keeping the project in the IDP proposal and her perseverance had paid off.
Conferences, seminars and workshops are a familiar feature of the academia. Universities expect members of their academic staff to regularly attend conferences and seminars to present their scholarly and research work to their peers. It is one of the ways for academics to earn international recognition. Ever since academic sanity returned to Makerere in the mid-1980s, members of staff have been constantly attending conferences all over the world. In fact, when the University Council enacted the Staff Development Policy in 1998, attendance at conferences was given due prominence and a vote set aside within the Staff Development Fund for this purpose. In 2000, when Dr Grace Kyomuhendo Bantebya attended the Seventh International Women’s Interdisciplinary Congress at the University of Tromso, Norway, many participants at the Congress had heard and read about Uganda’s efforts at achieving gender equity, and the success stories so far registered, including the Department of Women Studies at Makerere, one of the few such institutions in Africa. No doubt, Dr Bantebya lucidly expounded on these interesting developments during her presentation, and the audience liked what they heard.

At the end of the congress, the delegates had to choose a venue for the eighth congress, which was to be held in 2002. Without any dissenting voices, the delegates unanimously chose Makerere University. Caught unawares, Dr Bantebya had no choice but to accept the decision. It would be the first time that Africa had hosted this Congress. However, as she later confessed, she soon realised that she had committed the university to a challenge of huge proportions, moreover without first discussing it with her Vice Chancellor. The congress was usually a mammoth gathering, but it was now too late to turn it down. As far as the delegates were concerned, they expected to be in Kampala in 2002. She had to trust in Makerere’s old hallmark, its ability to rise up to challenges and to perform little miracles. In July 2002, Makerere and Kampala would be bustling with fervent activities as the university played host to one of the largest international gatherings in its history and which would put our ability at organising events to the test.

Given the state of the university’s infrastructure at the time, I could not help wondering whether we had the capacity to host an international conference of this magnitude. The university risked being disgraced in the eyes of the international community if the organisation of the event failed to meet the delegates’ expectations. What would happen if we botched up the whole thing? Would some heads roll? These were questions to which I had no immediate answers. I knew for certain that, the event would stretch all available university facilities to the limit. But, for better or for worse, Dr Bantebya’s decision to accept hosting the Congress at Makerere had sealed our fate. But instead of looking at it as an inconvenience, I began to sense the tremendous benefits and opportunities that would accrue to the university if the congress succeeded. The challenge was to get the organisational logistics right. Fortunately, over the years of its turbulent
existence, Makerere had become accustomed to tackling all sorts of challenges and had built a solid record in innovative problem solving. This was just another one of those challenges. All we had to do was sit down and get on with the necessary planning to ensure the congress succeeded. Grace Bantebya was expecting close to 2,000 delegates to attend the congress. I reasoned that to be able to pull it off, the planning had to be meticulous, with nothing left to chance. After that, we would be ready to entrust the things we considered to be beyond the realm of our human capability to the higher powers. One thing was certain though; this time around, the stakes were really high with the institutional and national reputation, as well as names on the block. Success was a must.

Two years seemed to be a long way off but, in reality, it was quite short. Several things had to be taken care of. Dr Bantebya and her colleagues in the department were a very competent and dependable team. They knew what to do and, by the middle of 2001, much of the planning had been done and the budget drawn up. Information about the congress was posted on the university’s website and on the other websites, and keynote speakers and paper presenters were identified. The various congress sub-themes had also been identified and carefully thought through. The most important activity that would eventually require my active involvement was fundraising for the congress. Fortunately, NORAD, Sida, the Dutch Government and other funding agencies responded very positively when we approached them with funding requests. From NORAD, the contribution to the congress was additional to the institutional development grant it had earlier extended to the university. However, in spite of the generous contributions from the various international funding agencies, we still had a big deficit which we had to find means to make up for. Furthermore, we had not yet formally informed the Government about this upcoming international event at Makerere. All this time, we had been informally communicating with the Government officials, in particular the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Welfare. It was now high time we made it official. Uganda had earned itself a reputation as a gender-sensitive country and the congress we were about to host was at the heart of it all; so, it was time for the Government of Uganda to get involved and we had reason to believe that the response would be positive and able to make up for the budget shortfall. The strategy was to inform the President, the Vice President and the Minister of Gender, Labour Social Welfare. Through them, all relevant government departments would be brought on board. The usual bureaucratic difficulties and red tape in government departments aside, the strategy worked well. The Vice President, Dr Specioza Wandera Kazibwe, a champion of the gender cause in her own right, agreed to meet us for a briefing on the congress. True to her word, she met us in the Parliamentary Building. Because of the productive discussions we had with the Vice President and other officials, the Government declared the congress a national event. This meant that the Protocol Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the security organs and other
government officials would work closely with the university to organise and host a successful congress. It also meant that the Government was obliged to commit some funds to the congress budget. The Minister responsible for Gender, Ms Zoe Bakoko Bakuru, was the main Government link with the university and chaired most of the subsequent meetings with the key Government officials. In fact, the Government’s quick and positive response and the financial commitment to the congress budget went beyond our wildest dreams. We had gone expecting a lukewarm reception at best. I was happy to have led the Makerere team at most of the discussion sessions at Simbamanyo House, which was the head office of the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Welfare. Dr Bantebya and her hardworking colleagues took care of the rest.

Although the Government’s response was good news, it placed a heavy responsibility on us to ensure that it did not default on its pledges. Governments, by their very nature, are difficult institutions to work with. Usually the excessively long red tape renders follow-up action on decisions laborious and frustrating, but thanks to Dr Bantebya’s relentless efforts and hard work, we managed to achieve as much as we could out of the pledges Government had promised. Most importantly, the President of Uganda agreed and confirmed in writing that he would officially open the congress on Sunday, July 22 2002. The First Lady too accepted our invitation to deliver a keynote address at one of the sessions. This was an incredible feat, but it was not yet time to pour the champagne on to the ice. A lot more had to be done to get the university ready for the event in time. As the pressure mounted, the clock seemed to be ticking much faster. To compound our problems, at the time the university did not have a Governing Council, therefore, no Tender Board or Estates and Works Committee to approve civil works and contracts, yet in everyone’s opinion, the University badly needed a face-lift. We had to resort to the time honoured practice that had served us well in the past. Whenever the University Council’s term expired, management assumed responsibility for all council decisions and actions, with the new council ratifying the decisions subsequently. However, this time the congress was stretching our powers to make decisions on behalf of a non-existent council to the very limit. We had approved not only major purchases and civil works, but also very large financial expenditures. Fortunately, the university’s well-established systems and procedures, coupled with our administrative experience, came in handy. We tasked the acting University Secretary, Sam Byanagwa and the University Bursar, Ben Byambabazi to source for funding to finance the urgent renovations and also top up Dr Bantebya’s budget which still had a deficit. It was not an easy task but they managed to find a reasonable amount of money to pay for most of the renovation work. With a limited budget and time constraint, the challenge was to select, in the shortest time possible, buildings and other facilities that needed a face lift. As usual, we turned to TECO to identify them and give us estimates of how much it would cost. Next was to quickly tender and commission the works.
Well before the opening ceremony, the contractors had completed renovating most of the buildings and facilities, which were needed for the congress. It took the contractors less than six months to complete the work. Now, the university was looking like it was ready to host a big international conference.

To our relief and jubilation, the congress went like clockwork. The long hours of hard work, the many helping hands, including the University Administration, staff, Government officials, students and volunteers from abroad; the meticulous planning and close attention to detail without leaving anything to chance, had all paid handsome dividends for the university. We were able to accommodate and feed most of the delegates in our halls of residence. In short, it was a good lesson in event organisation and management. However, no event is without glitches. Just as we thought everything was going on as planned, a last minute hitch unexpectedly cropped up, which almost threw all the meticulous work that had gone before into disarray. I am sure very few people knew the hell and the agonising moments Grace Bantebya and I had to go through the night before the opening ceremony on Sunday July 22, 2002. Thank goodness, I had prepared my speech well in advance. After taking care of every possible detail and logistics, with over 2,000 confirmed delegates, representing over ninety countries around the globe, the stage was now set for what we believed would be a busy week.

After giving due consideration to all available conference facilities in Kampala, including the International Conference Centre, Dr Bantebya advised that it would be a fitting honour to the university and her department to hold the opening ceremony in the Freedom Square. Besides the honour that would come with it, there were two other compelling reasons to hold it at the university. First it would legitimise the fact that hosting the congress in Uganda was primarily a Makerere affair. Secondly, after exploring other available facilities in Kampala, we had found none which had the capacity to sit over two thousand people in a single hall. However, holding it in the Freedom Square was tricky and necessitated consulting with some Government officials. Security for the President and delegates was paramount among our concerns. Honourable Eriya Kategaya was then Minister of Internal Affairs, so I decided to pay him a visit to find out his opinion about holding the ceremony in the Freedom Square. He agreed that in the circumstances, the Freedom Square was best alternative. He advised us not to worry about security matters, and that he had enough personnel and necessary logistics to ensure a security-tight ceremony.

Armed with Minister Kategaya’s assurance, we went ahead to prepare the square for the grand occasion. The problem was the state of the tarpaulins used for the graduation ceremonies. They were certainly an improvement on the papyrus mats that used to adorn the graduation marquee in the past, but for an international event of this magnitude, especially with the university in the spotlight of the international press, we had to look for something far better,
something of a more suitable quality, even if it meant committing additional funds. Dr Bantebya accepted to do the scouting for one. She happened to know of a company in town, Zipa Models of Sylvia Awori, which stocked a mega white tarpaulin tent. It could sit more than two thousand guests and it was available for hire. When contacted, the Zipa Models management assured us that the tent would be available. To secure its availability when we needed it, Dr Bantebya decided to pay the full hire fee in advance. She was not about to take chances.

A few weeks to the congress opening, Kampala was rife with talk of the wedding of the President’s second daughter. The couple had decided to entertain their guests to a reception at Munyonyo Resort owned by Kampala’s property mogul, Rupereria Shudir. The resort proprietor was also looking for the same kind of tent for the occasion. As it turned out, he did not have one of his own, so he was shopping around for one too. Zippa Models was the only place in town which had the kind of tent Shudir was looking for and Makerere University had already booked it. Since the President’s daughter’s wedding was almost coinciding with the congress, just a day before the opening ceremony, the company was reluctant to give it to Sudhir. Knowing that it takes almost three days to hoist the monstrous tent, it would be a risk to take it to Munyonyo a day before the event at Makerere. However, this was no ordinary wedding, it was the President’s daughter, and there was no way Zippa Models could refuse to give the tent to Sudhir simply because Makerere University had booked and paid for it in advance. All the company could do was to assure Dr Bantebya that the wedding reception at Munyonyo would be a short affair and that as soon as it ended, they would quickly pull the tent down, load it on the truck and bring it straight to Makerere. Then they would mobilise all the labour needed and do the hoisting throughout the night and by daybreak on Sunday, the job would be done. They confidently assured us that we had no reason to be overly worried about it. We took their word at face value.

As it turned out, the promises they were making was just typical salesman’s language. There would be no tent coming to Makerere on Saturday night. The wedding at Munyonyo was virtually an all night-long affair. We waited for the tent all night long in vain. As the old adage goes, it is always easier said than done. Promising to have the tent quickly delivered on site after the wedding at Munyonyo was one thing the company could easily do, but having it pitched on schedule in less than ten hours was another ball game altogether. When we were still in contact with them, we had reminded them that the President would also be presiding over the event at Makerere on Sunday afternoon. So they had no choice but to deliver on their promise. Dr Bantebya spent a fortune on the phone bills that night. She kept calling the company from the University Guest House where she spent the night. The company manager kept assuring her that the team with the tent was on the way to Makerere until at some point, I guess
close to midnight, they admitted that they were sorry; they had grossly underestimated the time the wedding reception would end. Now they had no idea when it would end. The news as it was being relayed to me, sent a chill down my spine, but we were determined not to let them off the hook that easily. They had signed a contract with us and if they failed to fulfil their part, then we would initiate legal action against the company. They would have to refund all the money we had paid them with interest and the cost of the suit. We kept calling until the company’s staff we had been talking to ran out of excuses and switched off his phones to avoid more calls from us, but not before they had made another assurance that no matter what, they would get the tent to Makerere in time for the opening ceremony. This time, they sounded less confident and convincing. For us, the thought that our two years’ hard and meticulous work and planning could be ruined at the last minute, was simply too ghastly to contemplate.

I am one of those who believe that when you organise an event, it is always a good idea to have a Plan B. The long experience in administration had taught me a lesson or two. Regardless of how meticulous the planning and how comprehensive the checklist, something could go wrong at any time. One of the alternative plans we immediately thought of was to ask the University Engineer at no notice to construct a shade using the university’s tarpaulins. I do not know how James Sempa, the acting University Engineer at the time could have done it in less than four hours, moreover on a Sunday. That option was not feasible. A better option was to contact another company we had talked to before, to provide several smaller tents which could be clustered together. Although it seemed to be a long shot, the idea made sense and we settled for that. It would be the first thing we would work on in the morning. I then advised Dr Bantebya to have some sleep. She had a lot ahead of her, and badly needed some sleep. I tried to catch up on some sleep myself, but in vain. A myriad of funny thoughts kept racing through my head all night long. I could not help wondering what would happen if the small tents we were banking our hopes on were actually not available, then what? Stand in front of that big gathering and apologise for the mess, which was beyond the university’s control. The very thought of seeing all those conference delegates from all over of the world sitting in the open and baked by the African afternoon blazing sun really terrified me. I did not know what to think anymore. What impression would the world go away with from Makerere, once described as the Harvard of Africa? What kind of legacy would I leave behind when I finally retire? Suddenly so much seemed to hinge on this single event – the congress.

Africans have strong faith in God and the supernatural. They believe that every passing day, God performs miracles. How else do you explain how so many Africans manage to live and survive on a continent full of human misery and suffering? It must be by the grace of the almighty God and the many African gods that they worship. Back to our unfolding nightmare about the tent, I thought
that it was time to pray for a miracle. Incredibly, the miracle happened. At about eight o’clock in the morning, just as we were getting ourselves to collect the small tents, a truck suddenly appeared at the Freedom Square, loaded with the long-awaited tent. There was hardly time to ask questions. The most important thing was to get the tent up before two o’clock. The task was a daunting one, but true to their word, Zipa Models mobilised the labour in a relatively short time. I wondered whether the company made profit on this deal! The tent would be ready before two o’clock in the afternoon. Although the security personnel were not amused to see so many people, descending on the Freedom Square, which they had been busy combing and sterilising for days, we had no choice but to let them in and get the job done. This was a race against time. By about one o’clock, the huge tent was up and nearly all furniture in. The work on the stage was progressing well too, but we thought it would not be ready before two o’clock, but that was of no serious consequence now. We were now certain that the grand opening ceremony could start at exactly two o’clock, and indeed it did. Grace Bantebya and her team could not hide their joy and relief. We had been through some harrowing moments which were now behind us. I thanked the good Lord for not forsaking us when we needed help most and for giving us fine weather. It was now time to usher in the guests and swing into action. By all accounts, it was a mammoth gathering.

We were aware that the President would come late, so we decided to start with the opening speeches with some entertainment in between. While we waited for the President; Rachael Magoola, formerly of the Afrigo Band, who was one of Uganda’s top female artists then, entertained the delegates with a group of young children. The President arrived when Professor Amina Mama, Director of the African Gender Institute at the University of Cape Town was delivering her keynote speech. We had to interrupt her to allow the President deliver his opening address and formally open the congress. We were so grateful the President made it in spite of having had a busy Saturday at his daughter’s wedding. His presence reinforced Uganda’s commitment to the promotion of gender equity. The Director General of NORAD, Dr Tove Strand, was one of the notable keynote speakers at the opening ceremony. The ceremony was so colourful that, as far as I was concerned, it was the appropriate climax to months of hard work and meticulous planning. Dr Bantebya’s list of participants was quite impressive too. They came from 94 countries, including the State of Palestine. Uganda’s Vice President, Dr Specioza Kazibwe, was there too together with several prominent Ugandans, my wife – Alice – also attended the opening ceremony. As protocol dictates in Uganda, the President spoke last and at the end of his address, he declared the 8th International Congress open amidst thunderous cheers. By all accounts, the opening ceremony had been a real extravaganza. We were now looking forward to an equally trouble-free week of interesting deliberations. Later that evening, I hosted Lady Silvia Nagginda, the Queen (Nabagereka) of Buganda and other
international guests to a music gala, staged by the Department of Music, Dance and Drama outside the Main Building. I was grateful to Professor Opio Epelu who advised that, for the external decorative work on the buildings, we use a more durable and moss-resistant weather guard paint. I felt so proud to see the old Main Building glittering so beautifully under a coat of new paint. I had never seen it so beautiful.

Everything worked as planned. Meals were served on time, the conference venues were constantly kept meticulously clean and in proper order, session after session. It was as though some unusual African magic was at work. Although over the successive years, Vice Chancellors had tried hard to make the university more public-friendly, to many Makerere was still that old ivory tower, and only a few dared to come and conduct business there. This congress therefore provided a rare opportunity for the Ugandan business community to hit the jackpot. In fact, we had expected the Zipa Models Company to pull the tent down immediately after the opening ceremony, but to our pleasant surprise, they allowed us to use it for the duration of the congress. This, in my opinion, was Sylvia Awori’s contribution to the congress as a woman who also believed in gender equity. Besides serving as an exhibition centre, the big tent soon became a hive of brisk business. Congress participants sought after curios of all sorts and other Ugandan goods that caught their fancy. I was told later that the taxi drivers made a kill too. They were charging the unsuspecting congress participants venturing out into town as much as ten dollars for a journey that ordinarily costs the equivalent of about three dollars. These were spill-overs of good fortune as the business community was enjoying from Makerere for the one-week duration of the congress. They were making the most out of the unprecedented opportunity while it lasted. After four fruitful days, the congress came to an end on July 27, 2002. Dr Specioza Wandera Kazibwe, the Vice President of Uganda, was at hand to close it and bid the participants farewell on behalf of the Uganda Government and Makerere University. I felt that throughout the congress, Makerere had been at its best. Grace Bantebya’s gamble of more than two years earlier had paid off. We were deeply indebted to everyone who, individually and collectively, worked so hard to make the congress such a huge success. Makerere University had earned its well-deserved accolades under my stewardship. Now I could look forward to my peaceful retirement.

The Department of Women Studies served as the Congress Secretariat, besides the conference halls in the Senate building, we had another modern conference centre in the department’s new building and we were soon using it. When the USA Secretary of Treasury, Paul O’Neil visited the university in 2002, the Department of Women and Gender Studies building was the obvious choice for his public lecture. The library in the new building was also impressive. Above all, staff no longer worked in cramped conditions in the old colonial bungalow. Their new offices were spacious and the envy of many university staff. This building, like the others
built or renovated in our time, stands testimony to our restless drive to modernise Makerere University. Besides boasting of modern lecture rooms and conference rooms, the new building would soon bring more benefits to the department. For example, whereas the teaching of Computer Science was the preserve of the Institute of Computer Science, the US-based Cisco Systems Corporation identified Women and Gender Studies as one of the departments at Makerere to teach its certified Computer Networking course. The announcement was made when the Cisco management team visited the university. As expected, the choice immediately raised eyebrows. The Director of the Institute of Computer Science was quick to question the wisdom of the Cisco decision to host a computer course there. He wondered whether a department with no known record of accomplishment in teaching such highly technical courses had the capacity to teach the Cisco networking course. The Director of the Institute of Computer Science’s criticism notwithstanding, the department was soon conducting the course alongside the one offered at the Institute of Computer Science.

Besides the exciting developments in the Department of Women and Gender Studies, the Faculty of Sciences registered other successes. Like the Faculty of Law, under the leadership of Dr James Sengendo, the Faculty of Social Sciences pioneered a phenomenon that would become one of the hallmarks and perhaps legacies of my vice chancellorship. The faculty used its internally-generated income to construct new buildings and renovate old ones. In fact, we stumbled upon the idea almost by accident. In the early 1990s, the Ministry responsible for Labour, Gender and Social Welfare proposed that the courses in Community Based Rehabilitation hitherto offered by the University of London be transferred to Makerere University. The training would be cheaper and the examples used in the teaching would be home-based. The Department of Social Work and Social Administration was selected to host the new programme. At the same time, the Norwegian Association for the Disabled (NAD), which was supporting a community-based rehabilitation programme in Uganda, had made available to the department funds amounting to some US $70,000 to construct a new building to house the programme. The NAD grant was just enough for a small building. However, pressure on the limited land on the Kendel Plateau (named after the British expert, who drew up a physical master plan for Greater Kampala in the 1960s) had become intense, forcing the University Council to enact a policy which required all future buildings within this area of the campus to be not less than three storeys. Therefore, the idea of a single-storey building existing behind the Faculty of Social Sciences was out of the question.

In spite of our insistence on a three-storey building, the Norwegian Association for the Disabled (NAD) was not able to increase the grant. There was even a more urgent side to the proposed building. If we failed to resolve the disagreement quickly, the Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) programme would be
in jeopardy. Sensing that Uganda could lose the opportunity to host the CBR programme (at the time it was considered a new programme), the Permanent Secretary, Mrs Tekla Kinaalwa, her Commissioner for Community Development and Rehabilitation, Mr James Baira and other officials of the Ministry decided to step in to save the situation. Philip Wabulya of the Department of Social Work and Social Administration, who had worked hard on the programme with, among others, Mr Jackson Mirembe of the same Ministry, who had taken a Masters degree in the same field in London, could not hide his disappointment. With no agreement in sight, Dr James Sengendo was taking all the fire from the Government and NAD, but I kept reassuring him that I would take full responsibility of any eventuality. To complicate matters further, NAD wanted a more flexible programme, which would include certificate courses open to Ordinary Level school certificate holders. Again, we had to say no because the university was in the process of phasing out all certificate courses. This was another bone of contention.

The NAD representative, a young Norwegian man, perhaps in his early 30s tried hard to convince us to accept the proposal for a single-storey building. Given the mounting pressure for space, we were reluctant to have another small building in this prime area of the university. On the other hand, there were some, including the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare staff, who thought we were unnecessarily too rigid and had started expressing concern that Makerere stood to lose the NAD donation and with the CBR programme because of intransigence over what they saw as a simple matter. The question was, why were we taking a rigid stance when the building was a donation and the CBR programme was of national importance? Again, why reject a donation and risk jeopardizing Government's plans to have the programme transferred from London to Uganda? Were we not mindful of the fact that by being seen to be too bureaucratic and intransigent, we were scaring away donors to the university? In fact, I began to wonder whether we had not gone too far! Moreover, a professor from the University of London, Dr Sally Harty, had come down to discuss with us the modalities for transferring the programme from London to Makerere and we had agreed on the transfer terms. She had also taken part in some of our discussions with NAD and Uganda Government officials on the proposed CBR building. In spite of these fears and concerns, I was convinced that we were doing the right thing. If we gave in, we would have had no moral justification to deny others the permission to put up similar buildings in this area. So, after making our position clear that we would not accept anything short of a three-storey building, the discussions with the Norwegian Association for the Disabled (NAD) ended in a stalemate.

In an attempt to break the deadlock and keep the discussions going, the Permanent Secretary, Mrs Kinaalwa decided to step in, which I thought was unwarranted. I still believed we could have reached a compromise without her personal intervention. I
recall an early morning appointment I had with her at my office. She came with a
deviation of her technical officers and the NAD representative; and as we sat down
to business, I apologised for dragging her in a matter, which I thought we could
have resolved without her direct intervention. Unfortunately, the meeting with Mrs
Kinaalwa failed to resolve our disagreement with NAD over the building. James
Sengendo appeared unsure of how he would break the bad news to his colleagues,
like Phillip Wabulya, who had been through intense preparations in anticipation of
the programme being transferred to Makerere. I had to keep assuring him not to be
overly worried if the NAD offer failed to materialise. At the time, the university –
and his faculty in particular – was earning a lot more money than the US $70,000
offer and, in the event NAD withdrew its offer or failed to improve upon it, that
would be a good fall-back. Indeed, when the talks failed, NAD withdrew its offer.
Our only concern after NAD pulled out of the project was whether the University
of London would allow us to run the programme without NAD’s assistance. When
the NAD offer fell through, James Sengendo and I convinced ourselves that we
could actually salvage the project using the faculty’s internally-generated funds.
Although James Sengendo was not so sure, he stood a chance of throwing the idea
through to his Faculty Board; he was prepared to give it a try. It was a tall order and
no doubt a tough sell, but James Sengendo managed to secure his Faculty Board’s
approval without much difficulty. Staff agreed to forego some of their teaching
allowances for an extra building which they believe would provide their faculty
with the much needed space. With the Faculty Board’s approval secured, we were
ready to re-activate the CBR building project, but this time every cent would come
from the sweat of our brows. That was a test for James Sengendo and the Faculty
of Social Sciences.

After the usual university procedural formalities, we were ready to cut the sod
again, but not before we had cancelled the contract NAD had already awarded to
a contractor, who was on site. TECO re-designed the building and supervised the
construction by a new contractor. In fact, when we told NAD and the Ministry
of Labour and Social Welfare that we had decided to construct a three-storey
building for the CBR programme using our own resources, they appeared sceptical
and did not believe we had the capacity to raise the kind of money needed for the
project. Construction began in 1996 and by September 1998, the building was
ready to be inaugurated. Instead of waiting to call our bluff as the construction
progressed, both NAD and the Ministry official came back expressing interest
to join hands with us again. Although we had no problem welcoming them
back, we had a point that it could be done without donor support. It was a
dicey gamble we had taken; we could have failed to raise the money but prudent
financial management did the trick. Finally, the Faculty of Social Sciences, one
of the largest faculties in the university, could boast of a second and much bigger
building in decades. To celebrate this historical landmark, James Sengendo
suggested that we invited the President of Uganda and Chancellor of Makerere
University to inaugurate the new building. To me, his request made sense. The President was the kind of person who appreciated self-reliant initiatives, and this was a good example. The problem was how to get him to come to the university to open such a small building. As the President was a busy person, it would have been difficult to convince him to come to Makerere for the inauguration alone. Fortunately, there was another way we could get the President to open the building officially – during the next graduation ceremony at the university. The inauguration of the new Social Sciences building would be part of the programme and would feature in his draft speech. That would be a brilliant idea, but from the practical point of view, it posed some problems. The President had a tendency to come late for graduation ceremonies. Asking him to inaugurate the building first would eat deep into the time for the graduation ceremony, keeping the graduands and guests waiting for too long. In fact, the Academic Registrar had opposed its inclusion on the official programme. The other concern was the President’s security. The Deputy Vice Chancellor, Professor Epelu Opio, was apprehensive about the idea of taking the President to the unsecured Faculty of Social Sciences. It would be difficult to monitor his security in such an open place.

James Sengendo was visibly disappointed that the odds were against the President’s inauguration of the building. He could not understand why the opening of the Social Sciences building had to be cancelled from the Chancellor’s programme for what he believed were weak reasons. According to him, the building was of a much higher value to the university than the graduation ceremony. As Vice Chancellor, I was expected to stand to make a decision on this matter. After all, right from the beginning I had been part of Sengendo’s efforts, why forsake him now? Interestingly, but also to complicate the situation further, James Sengendo wanted to put up a second and much bigger building that would alleviate shortage of lecture space for the faculty. He had decided that after the commissioning ceremony, he would ask the President to cut the sod and lay the foundation stone for the second building.

Although I was certain that my action would not go down well with some of my colleagues in administration, I decided to overrule the Academic Registrar’s decision. The inauguration of the Social Sciences building would be on the programme, after all the graduation ceremony was strictly an affair between the Chancellor and the Vice Chancellor, therefore I was in charge of it. I also agreed that the Chancellor should lay the foundation stone for the proposed second building as planned. It was now up to the presidential protection unit security to take care of the security issues. Dr Sengendo deserved our support and the President’s recognition for his contribution; this was the moment to do it and I was not about to let him down.

Indeed, the President performed both functions and James Sengendo dominated the Chancellor’s off-the-cuff remarks. He kept referring to him as this
man from Mawokota, and paying tribute to him for something that had never been attempted before at Makerere. Once again, we had pulled it off. However, all good things come to an end and so did Dr Sengendo’s term as dean towards the end of 1998, but not before the Postgraduate Diploma and Masters degree in Community Based Rehabilitation were approved and launched in 1997. His was a productive tenure. I am almost certain that when his colleagues elected him as dean for the first time in 1993, few expected him to be so productive. I was equally happy to see him promoted to the rank of Associate Professor in his old Department of Social Work and Social Administration, proving that besides his heavy administrative and teaching responsibilities, he could still find time to do research and publish quality papers in peer-reviewed journals. As we have seen, Dr Joy Kwesiga succeeded him as dean in the same year, but did not last long in the job. It was also the end of the proposed second building. By the time I left the university in 2004, the plans were still shelved.

A young upcoming man, Dr Edward Kirumira, from the Sociology Department where he had been head for barely a full term of three years, replaced Dr Joy Kwesiga as dean. He was one of the few members of staff to have obtained their PhD degrees from the University of Copenhagen in Denmark. Edward Kirumira with Charles Rwabukwali as deputy dean proved to be another effective team for the faculty. However, Kirumira happened to come into office at a time when the faculty had somehow grown cold feet over spending faculty money on new buildings at the expense of staff welfare. As a result, the faculty shelved James Sengendo’s second building indefinitely. Nevertheless, the faculty continued to see more exciting developments, as well as tragedies.

In 1991, McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada started a collaborative Health and Society Linkage Project with the faculty, which ended in 1995. The project and link were funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The Department of Social Work and Social Administration was one of the key departments in the project, the Department of Nursing being another. Community-based approaches in the education of social workers and nurses, as well as staff development, were the major components of the project. Under the same project, the department recast its curriculum to focus more on community oriented training. It meant that students of Social Work would spend a considerable part of their training in the field. Dr Susan Watt, a Professor of Social Work at McMaster, was overall in charge of the project on the Canadian side.

Stephen Ouma and Peninah Dufite were early beneficiaries of the project’s staff development funding. Both had taken their PhDs at McMaster University, with Stephen Ouma returning earlier. By the time I returned to Makerere in 1993, he was Head of the Department of Social Work and Social Administration. He had worked hard to get the Master of Arts in Social Sector Policy degree programme
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approved and launched. Although the department had been in existence for a long time and was constantly attracting the most brilliant students, it had never had a postgraduate degree programme. Unfortunately, as Stephen Ouma was putting the finishing touches to his new Masters programme, tragedy was lurking in the dark. What started as a simple illness ended up claiming the life of this brilliant and industrious young man. The death of Dr Stephen Ouma was a blow to a department that was desperate for high calibre young staff.

After Stephen Ouma’s premature death, we found ourselves desperately looking for his replacement. We loaded the responsibility onto Dr Peninah Dufite, who at the time was a lecturer. We were lucky, she accepted the responsibility but little did I know that she would also pass away just a few years later. Her death was another tragic loss, coming soon after the death of Stephen Ouma.

The mid-1990s were really bad years for the university. Death was busy robbing us of the young promising members of staff. For the Department of Social Work and Social Administration, the death of its two members of staff came on the heels of the departure of one of its most senior and long serving staff, Associate Professor Patrick Muzaale. Dr Muzaale had headed the department for several years in the past and had long stepped down. After the death of Dufite, Dr Muzaale had volunteered to act as head again, while we looked for her replacement. A few months later, Government appointed him full time Chairman of the Public Service Commission and whisked him away from Makerere. In quick succession, the department lost Dr Nangendo, another McMaster PhD holder to Dr Jessica Gita’s Child Health and Development Centre (CHDC), based in the Medical School. Dr Wandera-Nabaho, who had served as Head of Department for several years was approaching retirement, and in accordance with University Council Policy, at his relatively advanced age, he could not head the department again. Even some members of staff appeared reluctant to have backed him as their head. We had no choice, but to turn to the much younger and junior staff to take over the departmental leadership mantle. Nathan Asingwire, who had taken his Masters degree also at McMaster, had shown a lot of promise. Faced with a leadership crisis, we decided to request him to act as Head of Department, until a substantive head could be identified. The young man was shocked at our request. Not only would he be giving instructions to his superiors and former teachers, he suspected he would be in this position for a long haul, which turned out to be the case. After assuring him of our unwavering support, he accepted to take on the responsibility. However, to everyone, surprise, the young man was a performer and turned out to be a good choice. He managed to keep the department going in the midst of the many challenges. Despite my initial concerns about his lack of administrative experience, I was grateful to him for keeping the department together in those rather difficult times. I remember him approaching me once with a request to step down so that he could concentrate on his PhD thesis
research. I had to persuade him to shelve the idea for a while. That was something I rarely did and, perhaps in his case, I did it for selfish reasons. The truth was that we had failed to find a suitable person to replace him. The young man took my advice and continued to act as head at the detriment of his PhD. In spite of the heavy administrative and teaching responsibility, he was also busy writing and publishing papers, which earned him promotion to Senior Lecturer before he completed his PhD, which he obtained soon after I had left the university. To his credit, the department was able to oversee the launching of the controversial Postgraduate Diploma and the Master of Arts degree in Community-Based Rehabilitation.

The sudden death of Professor Akiki Mujaju in a road accident in December 1998 sent shock waves throughout the university community; a tragedy that left many of us dumbfounded. It was simply too hard to believe that Akiki was dead. The same day he died, he had attended Senate, presented and ably defended his proposal for a new Master of Arts programme in International and Diplomatic Studies, which was to be offered in the Department of Political Science and Public Administration of which he was the head. After Senate approved his new degree, he sent me a note requesting permission to leave early, because he wanted to go to Fort Portal in Kabarole District in Western Uganda, to attend to an urgent family matter, to which I obliged. At about six o’clock that evening, just as I was settling down to a cup of tea, the phone rang, with the terrible news. The caller went straight to the point, and informed me that Professor Mujaju had been involved in a road accident on his way to Fort Portal and was in critical condition in Mubende Hospital. The accident happened a few kilometres to Mubende town, almost the half-way point between Kampala and Fort Portal. As a result of a burst tyre, the driver lost control of the vehicle which skided off the road, hitting an embankment and overturning in the process. Only Professor Mujaju sustained serious injuries. The rest survived the accident with minor injuries. Some good Samaritans rushed him to Mubende Hospital, which was the nearest health facility to the scene of the accident. Unlike Mulago Hospital, which is both a teaching and a national referral hospital, Mubende Hospital did not have the kind of the facilities to handle such a serious emergency case. However, the medical officers who attended to him did their best to save his life, but the head injuries he had sustained were so severe that his chances of surviving were at best minimal.

After contacting the Deputy Vice Chancellor and other senior officers in the administration and in his faculty, we quickly organised a vehicle to pick him up and bring him to Mulago. Although time was of the essence, Mubende town is almost a three-hour drive from Kampala. We figured that the round journey would take a minimum of five hours and, therefore, the earliest they could get him to Mulago Hospital would be after mid-night. With the odds stacked against
us, my colleagues in the Political Science Department did whatever they could to get their injured senior colleague to Kampala. Sadly, by the time they arrived at Mubende, Mujaju had already died from the severe head injuries. The body was brought back to the university for a proper requiem. It was another sad occasion for the university. One of Makerere’s academic giants had suddenly gone without warning. By his death, a dark cloud had descended over the Department of Political Science and Public Administration, and the Faculty of Social Sciences as a whole. Despite the long distance to Fort Portal, several members of the university community made the journey to bid their renowned colleague a befitting farewell. We buried him in his humble home district of Kabarole.

The passing away of Professor Akiki Mujaju, a PhD graduate of Columbia University in New York, brought to an abrupt end the chapter of a man who had once stared death in the face and narrowly escaped the fangs of Idi Amin’s killer machine. He took refuge in Kenya, where he got a teaching appointment in the Department of Government at the University of Nairobi, and where he remained for many years. He returned to Makerere after the fall of Idi Amin. Mujaju also battled ill-health for a long time, as well as the hard times which followed the ousting of Amin’s Government. He had endured all gracefully. Although he was soft-spoken and could pass for an introvert, he was an astute intellectual giant in his own right and a good orator. He represented that breed of academics that had contributed so much to Makerere’s reputation as an African intellectual cradle. Occasionally, he would not hesitate to use his intellectual prowess and wit to make a scathing attack on Government and the Head of State. However, because of the Government’s tolerance of even severe criticism, he always got away with it. Interestingly, he never hid his strong support for the Uganda Peoples’ Congress (UPC). Given the party’s record, many expected him to be equally critical of UPC. It was perhaps one of those contradictions so common in the lives of many highly intelligent people. Although most Political Science students shared the view that Apolo Nsibambi and Mahmood Mamdani were somehow predictable and the dichotomy between the two men was fairly clear-cut, Nsibambi on the right and Mamdani on the left, it was difficult to pin an ideological label on Akiki Mujaju. His real ideological inclination puzzled many of his students. He seemed to be ideologically neutral, although being a prominent member of Uganda Peoples’ Congress could have been taken as an indication that he was on the left. We can only speculate that perhaps he wanted to remain an enigma to many in order to maintain his objectivity as a true political scientist, not wanting ideological inclinations to cloud and bias his judgement. With Mujaju gone, Tony Gingera Pincywa at the verge of retirement and Dent Ocaya Lakidi still living in exile, the sun had set on an era that had seen Ali Mazrui at his best and quickly ascending to the pinnacle of academic prominence, rising straight from Lecturer to full Professor. An unforgettable era and a vibrant department to which Yashi Tandon, Uddin, Apolo Nsibambi, James Katorobo – one of a handful of Ugandans who
have attended and obtained their PhD degrees from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in the USA – had been an integral part. Mahmood Mamdani and Foster Byarugaba belonged to the latter times. Fortunately, there was a new and younger generation of academics coming up. One of them, Rutanga Murindwa, who had just completed his PhD at Jawaharlal University in Calcutta, India, took over from late Mujaju as Head of Department.

When we came into administration in 1993, the Department of Political Science and Public Administration had just a handful of women on its teaching staff; moreover, all of them were young and just starting their academic careers at Makerere. Hardly anyone of them was above the Teaching Assistant grade and all of them had only their first degrees. Genevieve Ekyarimpa was one of them. It was, therefore, gratifying to see her progress steadily upwards, completing her MA in the Hague, getting appointed as full lecturer and embarking on her PhD. The reason I have singled her out was the way I first met her.

Before the January 1994 academic staff strike, she and other young MUASA members led by the Association President, the late Joseph Carasco, met us in my office some time in November 1993. We had barely been in office for more than two months when MUASA requested this meeting. They came to present to the new university management the old problem of the living wage. Although we were sympathetic to their plight, I must admit it was the least amicable meeting I had ever attended. Rightly or wrongly, it gave me the impression of a hidden agenda. I remember Joseph Carasco (now deceased) lecturing us on how he and other MUASA executive members had come into office in a democratic way, but was unsure how we had come into our respective offices. In his characteristic way, Professor Epelu Opio reminded him that if he was concerned about how we came into office, one thing was certain: we had not been picked from a garbage dump. At the time, Fred Juuko had stepped down as President of the Association. That was also the time MUASA was dominated by younger and junior members of staff, the Teaching Assistants and graduate fellows. Although Genevieve never said much in that meeting, her composure impressed me. She was not one of the vocals. Dr Nansozi- Muwanga was another new addition to the departmental growing list of women members of staff. She joined Makerere in the late 1990s after graduating with a PhD from the University of Toronto in Canada. At the time of my retirement in 2004, the department boasted of three full-time women members of staff – by no means an impressive figure but certainly a tremendous improvement on the past record.

When in 1999 the University Council passed a policy requiring academic staff at the rank of Lecturer and above to have a PhD degree or its equivalent, and those who did not have it had to acquire it within three years, Political Science and Public Administration was one of the departments that took the lead. Several members of staff took advantage of the university’s Staff Development Fund which had
been launched, and registered for the PhD degree at universities in South Africa. At the time, the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg had the lion’s share of the political scientists. I was happy to meet many of them there in 2003 when I led a delegation of deans and Directors on an academic tour of eleven South African universities with which we had initiated collaboration. Others, such as Dr Elijah Mushemeza and J. Kiiza went to The Hague in The Netherlands and Sydney, Australia respectively. Muhindo Syahuka’s PhD registration at Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario, had almost expired. He had dropped out of his doctoral programme because of lack of sponsorship. I could not help feeling sorry for this young man who had been a victim of circumstances. As a graduate student at Makerere, he had excelled; and based on the quality of his MA thesis, his supervisor, Mahmood Mamdani had recommended that the thesis be upgraded to a PhD. For some reason, the Higher Degrees Committee of Senate turned the supervisor’s recommendation down. In the end, Makerere awarded him the MA degree he had registered for in the first place, after which he left for Canada, where he registered for a PhD at Queen’s University. However, he was unable to complete the degree because his funding ran out. He then returned to Makerere, where he got stagnated. As chairperson of the Staff Development Committee, I decided to rescue this frustrated young man. After a series of meetings with him and after assuring me that his registration at Queen’s University had not yet expired, I conferred with the acting Academic Registrar, Mr Ngobi, who was Secretary to the Committee, on the possibility of sponsoring him from the Staff Development Fund to enable him go back to Canada to complete his PhD. We agreed that, much as it would be costly, it was worth it. I was happy to see the young man go back to Canada to resume his doctoral programme on Makerere’s sponsorship.

In spite of the setbacks it had suffered in recent years and the fact that the days of fiery oratory and the duels of intellectual prowess between Ali Mazrui of Makerere and Walter Rodney of Dar es Salaam were long past, the Department of Political Science and Public Administration was taking big strides. It was now attracting good quality staff, but the overriding concern was its ability to retain them. In a relatively short time, the department had succeeded in recruiting a number of promising and even senior personalities such as Dr Kabumba, who was once the Managing Director of the National Insurance Corporation, and Dr Kiyaga Nsubuga, who had returned with a PhD from the University of Toronto in Canada. He was one of the new recruits who did not stay long. He left for the Uganda Management Institute, where he was appointed Deputy Executive Director. In fact, many left as soon as they came but it was equally gratifying to welcome back Dent Ocaya Lakidi, who had spent many years in exile, and Dr Yassin Olum, who the department had enticed to come to Makerere from the Islamic University in Mbale. Besides the improving staffing, Akiki Mujaju (now deceased) even revived the once popular lunchtime public lectures. Like most departments in the university, Political Science had no part-taught and part-
thesis postgraduate degrees. This changed in the 1993/94 academic when the Master of Arts in Public Administration and Management (or MAPAM as we used to call it) admitted the first batch of pioneering students. It was an evening programme, targeting mainly people already in employment. As it was directly relevant to their jobs, the younger administrative staff of the university who at the time did not have a second degree seized the opportunity, and several of them were some of the pioneer students on the new programme. The Master of Arts in Public Administration and Management started when my old friend Foster Byarugaba was the Head of Department. Before the era of word processing, when penmanship mattered, Foster Byarugaba was one of those people whose beautiful handwriting I admired. Some used to make a joke that you could tell who is a Catholic simply by looking at their handwriting. By coincidence, Foster Byarugaba happened to be a good Catholic too.

Initially, some staff in Political Science had expressed reservations and misgivings about the Capacity Building Programme for the decentralised districts in Uganda, which the HYPERLINK “mailto:I@mak.com” \h I@mak.com was funding, arguing that by promoting such a programme, we were perhaps inadvertently turning the university into a polytechnic. It was interesting to see that it was one of the departments in the Faculty of Social Sciences that eventually embraced the programme. The department submitted a proposal to the committee, requesting funding to develop a three-year Bachelor’s degree course in Local Government. Although I was not able to see this new degree through to the final approval stage, it captured the HYPERLINK “mailto:I@mak.com” \h I@mak.com philosophy and objectives of advancing Makerere’s support to Uganda’s development initiatives through decentralised governance. It was a rewarding experience to witness all these interesting and significant developments take place in this faculty and department when I was in charge of Makerere’s affairs.

The election of Dr Edward Kirumira, a sociologist as dean soon after Dr Joy Kwaresa, a gender specialist and James Sengendo, a social worker, marked another break with tradition. By commission or omission, for many years the office of Dean had been dominated by political scientists: Ali Mazrui in the late 1960s, Gingyera Pincwya and Apolo Nsibambi in the ’70s and ’80s, to mention but a few, were all from the same department. Indeed, from cursory observation, Political Science and Public Administration appeared to be the dominant department in the Faculty of Social Sciences. Edward Kirumira was one of the most promising upcoming generations of Makerere academics. From my short association with him, I found in him a person who never seemed to run out of energy. He was the kind of person who quickly responded whenever he was called upon to lend a hand on a task, and he did it efficiently. He was a prolific academic too. In spite of the heavy teaching and administrative duties, he still found sufficient time for his research and published quality work which enabled him to rise quickly through
the ranks. He had not even begun his second term as Head of Sociology when his colleagues spotted his potential and entrusted him with the leadership of the faculty as dean. Admittedly and for reasons I can hardly explain, Sociology was one of the few departments I least patronised as Vice Chancellor. Occasionally, there were a few problems there that required us to sort out, including one, which involved a young male lecturer and a female student. The student accused the lecturer of sexual harassment and deliberately under-marking and penalising her by giving her low grades, because she rebuffed his love overtures. However, the investigation did not turn up any incriminating evidence against the lecturer. Her script was remarked by another examiner who detected no deliberate penalisation as she had alleged. In the end, the student failed to substantiate her allegations.

Dr Edward Kirumira took over the headship of the department from Mrs Christine Kisamba Mugerwa, whom I had come to know through her husband, Dr Wilberforce Kisamba Mugerwa. He and I had met as postgraduate students in 1973 when we were both residents of the newly opened Postgraduate Hall, Dag Hammarskjold. Since then, we had become good friends. Sociology was also the department of Charles Rwabukwali, another good friend of the family and fellow Quarry House resident. A brilliant man, he got his PhD from the Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio. The soft-spoken Frank Kakinda Mbaaga, who had initially trained as a biochemist at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Canada before switching career to the Social Sciences, was another old time friend at the department.

Mrs Kisamba Mugerwa was already Head of Sociology before I returned to Makerere in 1993, and a successful one too. Like most Heads of Departments at the time, staffing was her constant headache; but over time, she managed to build a strong team of young staff, including Edward Kirumira, P Atekyere, M. Samula who had been there before I left for Kyambogo, Igime Katagwa, Florence Asiimwe, D. Waiswa, Jagwe Wada, Arojjo Obbop and a young man with an interesting and rare name, A. E. State. Some of these young members of staff joined the department at junior ranks. More staff joined the department later as Assistant Lecturers and Teaching Assistants. However, when her husband completed his PhD in 1996, a feat he achieved while he was a full-time senior Cabinet Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Animal Industry in the Government of Uganda, Mugerwa requested to step down and concentrate on her PhD too. She decided to register at the University of Dar es Salaam, on a Makerere University scholarship. As it was now standard practice, I granted her a three-year study leave to enable her concentrate on her thesis. Although the majority of staff in her department were young, we were more than happy to welcome Dr Rose Nyonyintono, one of the graduates of the defunct University of East Africa. She had spent many years working as a consultant with the Eastern and Southern Management Institute (ESAMI), based in Arusha, Tanzania. She came back to Makerere at Senior
Lecturer level with a wealth of field experience. When Kirumira moved up to dean'ship with Charles Rwabukwali as Deputy Dean and Dr Nyonyintono still relatively new in the department, Dr Atekyereza, who had completed his PhD at Makerere a few years earlier, took over the stewardship of the department, while waiting for the election and appointment of a substantive head.

Like most disciplines during the Makerere of the 1960s, Sociology too had its hey days when late Professor Rigby was Head of Department. He had to leave rather abruptly when Idi Amin ordered every white expatriate to leave the country in 1972. When Rigby died, most of his personal library collection was bequeathed to Makerere University. After the expatriates left, a few Ugandans who were there at the time took over the mantle of leadership at the department. Professor Paul Kibuuka was notable among them and the most senior of the remaining staff, and the somewhat eccentric Dr Bagamuhunda (now deceased) was another. Professor Kibuuka was a specialist in Crime and Punishment and when the United Nations set up the UNAFRI in Uganda, he was one of the first senior Ugandans to join the new institute as Deputy Director, a position he kept for several years. Being a Ugandan, that was the highest he could go, as the regulations required that the Institute Director could not be a Ugandan. His departure for the Naguru-based international organisation left the Department of Sociology without expertise in Criminology, which was becoming increasingly important as crime soared country-wide. Some members of staff agreed to take up the challenge to fill the vacuum. Unfortunately, none of them had the required background and competence to register for a PhD in the discipline. Whoever wanted to take up the challenge had to undergo a crash programme to study the fundamentals of the subject. Mr Samula had already expressed interest in the subject and he was looking for support to finance his basic training in the subject before he could embark upon the PhD. Professor Kibuuka was willing to assist, but he was too busy and therefore not readily available to train him. After some inquiries, we discovered that Samula could take a one-year tailor-made conversion course at the University of South Africa (UNISA), so we decided to grab the opportunity for him. After completing the necessary formalities, he was on his way to South Africa for the orientation course at Makerere’s expense. He had the honour of being one of the first members of staff to receive direct sponsorship from the University Staff Development Fund. Before long, the department had a replacement for Professor Kibuuka. Florence Asiimwe was another member of staff the University sponsored for her PhD at the University of Cape Town. When we visited the University of Cape Town in 2003, Florence quickly mobilised some Ugandan and South African students and put on a cultural show for our entertainment, which we appreciated. In fact, I used to tease her by calling her a cheeky girl for her easy-going nature. By 2004, a department which had been running predominantly undergraduate programmes for years had a well established Masters degree (MA) in Sociology.
Before I left the university, I was convinced and optimistic that the Faculty of Social Science had a promising future. Not merely as an incubator and clearing house for new faculties and departments, which it had done very well, but in its own right as a serious academic entity. Besides contributing to Makerere's fame in the past, it was one of the few faculties at Makerere to have nurtured and given birth to an impressive list of new faculties. The list included the Faculties of Law; Commerce, which was later transformed into Makerere University Business School after moving to Nakawa; Makerere Institute of Social Research, the Institute of Economics, which became the Faculty of Economics and Management shortly before I left, and indirectly, the Institute of Psychology. Indeed, that was an achievement to be proud of. Although, when the Economics Department broke away, some members of staff had expressed fear and anxiety about the faculty's future, referring to it as a shrinking and endangered faculty, my view at the time was that their fears were unfounded. All they had to do was to continue introducing new programmes which, in due course, would and could evolve into new departments within and outside the faculty. I strongly believed that the discipline of Social Science was not a dead-end discipline. On the contrary, it was an evolving discipline and new fields were emerging. The faculty had to take advantage of these new fields and incorporate them in its structure. That was a lesson I learnt over my long years in the academia.

School of Education – Once the only Fountain of Graduate Teachers for Uganda and Beyond

Education is one of the oldest disciplines at Makerere. For the reader interested in the detailed history of Education at Makerere, Margaret McPherson offers a brief, but interesting insight in her book, They Built for the Future, published by Cambridge University Press. It is one of the few faculties at Makerere to have produced two Vice Chancellors – Professors Asavia Wandera and William Senteza Kajubi – with the latter occupying the seat twice. In the past, when Makerere was still a college, Africa's most famous statesman, the late Julius Nyerere of Tanzania studied at the Department of Education and so did Kenya's first Vice President, the late Jaramogi Oginga Odinga. Another graduate and staff of the faculty was Father Emmanuel Wamala, who later became His Eminence Emmanuel Cardinal Wamala. The late Bishop Nabeeta, who was Cardinal Wamala's contemporary, was also once part of the school's staff. Both men were Catholic and Anglican chaplains respectively and lecturers at the Faculty of Education. The entire faculty was once a single department, the Department of Education. Over the years, it has evolved from a single department into a multi-departmental faculty, with the National Institute of Education, a semi-autonomous unit, alongside it. In the 1980s, under Professor Jacayo Ocitti as dean, it assumed the status of a school. By the time I left the university, the number of departments had gradually risen from...
three to six: Educational Foundations and Management; Curriculum, Teaching and Media; Social Sciences and Arts Education; Language Education; Science and Technical Education, as well as Higher Education. Higher Education was the latest addition. Most of the new departments came into being during the transition from a faculty to a school. I recall how Professor Ocitti laboured to convince Senate that indeed there was a difference between a school and a faculty. Most Senate members believed that there was basically no difference between the two. They thought that the department just wanted a new and more fanciful label. In the end, after some intense debates, Education carried the day and it became the School of Education. The school is located in the older part of the university – the southern end of the main campus. It is also where the first main university administration building, commissioned in 1923 and now part of the School of Education, is also located. The Department of Science and Technical Education (DOSATE) and the Department of Higher Education now occupy this old building.

By the time I came into administration, this historical building and other equally old buildings on the university campus were almost dilapidated. Years of neglect, due to lack of money for maintenance, had taken their toll. Dr Jane Mulemwa, a fellow chemist and like me, a PhD graduate of Queen's Belfast, was then the head of the relatively new Department of Science and Technical Education. Every time I had occasion to visit her, I could not help feeling deeply sorry seeing her working in such a miserable place. In fact, I used to tease her, wondering why she chose to go to the School of Education when she could have made better use of her PhD in Physical Chemistry at the Department of Chemistry in the Faculty of Science. I guess she had her heart and mind in the teaching profession. She would only plead to the university to do something about the plight of her struggling department. At the time, her appeals sounded like a cry in the wilderness. I had no idea where I could source for funds to rehabilitate such an old building. In my candid opinion, I would have recommended for it to be pulled down, but as a friend once reminded me history had an important place in society, and we had a duty to preserve this old building.

Fortunately, at the time, the Ministry of Education had earmarked Science and Technical Education as one of the departments at Makerere that would benefit from the African Development Bank education loan the Government had negotiated way back in 1987. As conditionality to the loan, the bank required the Government of Uganda to set up a counter-fund. Part of the counter-fund would be used to finance the rehabilitation work at the university and that included the DOSATE building. Reverend David Sentongo, who was then the University Secretary worked hard to ensure that the Ministry of Finance did not backtrack on the Government's commitment. Fortunately, the Government lived up to its promise. The Ministry of Finance kept releasing the funds to the university, albeit in small instalments as part of the university's capital development budget. That was good enough for us
to do something about the old building. Soon, we had completed the renovation of this once majestic building, which at the time was the college’s seat of power. As we were about to complete the rehabilitation, the old clock in the tower on top of the building caught the attention of one of our Norwegian friends, Professor Endre Lilethum of the University of Bergen. Professor Lilethum was coordinating the NUFU programme in DOSATE and was also very keen to have the clock restored. He pledged to raise private funds in Norway to buy a replica of the old clock which, according to technical experts, was beyond repair. True to his word, he managed to raise the money, and bought a good replica in Norway. Since the national power grid was not so reliable at the time, we decided to install a small solar panel on top of the building to power the clock. We tasked Edward Kirumira (now deceased), a technician in the Department of Electrical Engineering, to install the clock. Before long, the clock in the tower of this historical building was chiming and looking exactly like the old one. In spite of the contractor’s less-than-professional workmanship, the building had once again taken on a new and beautiful look, and a befitting home to a department set up to train secondary school Science and Mathematics teachers. I was happy to hand over the rehabilitated building to Dr Mulemwa in 1995.

The Department of Higher Education had an interesting beginning too. It began as an idea in the 1980s when Mr Bernard Onyango, Professor Senteza Kajubi and others felt that university lecturers lacked teaching skills and, as a result, some of them were doing a really bad job. As an undergraduate student, I also experienced some really lousy teaching which could be traced to the problem of lack of formal training in teaching methods. When it came to teaching at the university, a qualification in Education was not a requirement. As far as the university was concerned, all that mattered was one’s good academic credentials. Bernard Onyango was concerned and wanted to do something about bad teaching. He strongly believed that lecturers needed training in teaching methods and lecture delivery methodology or pedagogy. Professor Kajubi, who had returned to the National Institute of Education (NIE) after serving his first tour as Vice Chancellor, and a few other members of staff in the School of Education, including Dean Jacayo Ocitti, who had taken a similar course at the University of Manchester, started putting Onyango’s ideas on paper. So, the Higher Education unit in the School of Education was born. When Senteza Kajubi left Makerere to take up a similar course at the University of Manchester, Kyambogo in 1988, Dr Hannington Nsubuga, who had also been with the NIE, took over the leadership of the unit. However, for administrative purposes, the unit remained under the ambit of the office of the Dean of Education. But for some reason, the idea of training university academic staff in pedagogical techniques en masse never materialised. When Dr Nsubuga left the university to take up another appointment at Ndejje University, which was one of the new private universities, Professor Ocitti took over the headship of the unit. Under
Professor Ocitti, the unit received some funding from a European Union grant to Makerere University and started organising pedagogical training sessions, but the funds ran out before all staff could be trained. After that, the unit went into limbo. In fact, a committee, which investigated the problems in the School of Education, had recommended that the Higher Education unit be scrapped; but the University Council did not endorse the recommendation.

The appointment of Dr James Nkata, who had completed his PhD at Makerere in 1997 and who for many years had been an Education Officer for Mpigi District; Dr Adonia Teberwondwa (now deceased), who came in as Associate Professor and was later promoted to full Professor and Professor J. C. S. Musaazi, who had been at the University of the West Indies for some years, breathed new life into the unit. Dr Teberwondwa had been a prominent politician, a former senior Cabinet Minister in the Obote II Government and a staunch member of the Uganda Peoples’ Congress (UPC). As a result, his re-appointment into the university service stirred some controversy in the Appointments Board. There were some who appeared to be opposed to his return, but after examining his papers and publications and subjecting them to an external evaluation, the Board was satisfied that he was well-qualified and merited re-appointment and later promotion to full Professor. In fact, Teberwondwa was one of the rare breeds of Ugandan politicians who successfully managed to combine participation in active politics with academics. I wondered how he was able to find time for his academic work and I could not help thinking that perhaps the man never slept. His hard work fascinated me and stood him in good stead when politics went sour for him. Professor Musaazi took over as Head of the unit from Professor Ocitti. Under Professor Musaazi’s leadership, the unit was transformed into the sixth department in the School of Education, with a new mandate. Instead of continuing with pedagogical training for university staff, which had no funding, Professor Musaazi and his colleagues decided to turn it into a postgraduate training department, specialising in Educational Management and Planning, among other disciplines.

The new postgraduate programme started with the Master of Arts in Educational Management (MA Ed Mgt). The new two-year programme was very popular among many practising teachers, who apparently were nurturing ambitions of becoming head-teachers, college principals and career educational administrators. To beef up staff, Professor Musaazi approached the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation (CFTC) with a request for funding for two long-term senior professors. The CFTC approved his proposal and recruited two professors, Drs Samuel Owolabi and Alhas Maicibi, from Nigeria. Besides the two Nigerians, a third professor, Dr Martin Amin, a Cameroonian, also joined the department on a semi-local contract. Makerere University paid a portion of his salary in local currency while the rest came from another source. This was also about the time Professor Musaazi had been requested to provide some technical
assistance in Lesotho. He wanted to make sure that his departure for Lesotho would not leave his young department in a vacuum. Mr Avitus Tibarimba, the former University Secretary, was one of the few who taught courses on part-time basis. His lectures were based on his real life experience as a senior university administrator. By the time I left the university, he was in the process of registering for a PhD with the department. The additional staff in terms of numbers and, more importantly, in terms of academic qualifications and experience helped the new department consolidate its teaching and research capacity. Besides the MA students, the PhD enrolment was also rising steadily. My old student and then Minister of Education and Sports in Buganda Government, John Chrysostom Muyingo, was one of them. He received his PhD in March 2004 at my last graduation ceremony as Vice Chancellor. I was fortunate to have been a witness to this remarkable and dramatic transformation of what began as a small unit with a simple mandate and which, by all accounts, was at the verge of being transformed into one of the most vibrant departments in the School of Education. That is the value of quality leadership and what it can do to an institution.

One of the prominent features of the School of Education one noticed was the age difference between the old and young staff. This unusual situation arose largely because of the constant loss of staff in the difficult years that followed Idi Amin’s coup of 1971 and the subsequent political turmoil and insecurity the country experienced after the fall of Idi Amin. One of Makerere’s best education psychologists, Professor Barnabas Otala, now at the University of Namibia, was one of the prominent and eminent academics the school lost early in Idi Amin’s rule. He narrated to me the harrowing experience he went through to save his life when Amin’s security operatives were looking for him, because his surname began with the letter O and for this reason they had mistaken him for a Langi or an Acholi, who were then considered to be enemies of Government and suspected of collaborating with Milton Obote in Tanzania. While he was teaching a class in the Main Hall shortly before lunch, his secretary came rushing in and took him aside to warn him about three men wearing dark glasses, who had come to the Department of Education Psychology, where he was the head and demanded to know where he was. She told him that when she asked them what they wanted him for, they declined to give an answer. After discovering that he was not in his office, they walked away. To Barnabas Otala, the message was loud and clear. He decided not to return to the department. Somehow, that very day he managed to find his way out of the country to Kenya, ending up at the Kenyatta University. A few years later, he moved further south and got a job with the University of Botswana, before joining the National University of Lesotho. He finally ended up at the University of Namibia, where he spent the rest of his active working life. Professor Otala had taken over from Professor Druguya, a Nigerian, who had worked hard to build the Department of Education Psychology, which was actually a merger of Psychology in Social Sciences and Education Psychology.
Professor Peter Muyanda Mutebi, a native of the Ssese Islands in Lake Victoria who, in the latter years of his career, became the Executive Director of the National Curriculum Development Centre at Kyambogo was one of those who had to leave Makerere after only a short stint. However, in the mid '90s, he came back briefly under the UNDP TOKTEN programme. The conditions attached to TOKTEN scheme were that, at the end of the assignment, he had to return to the country where the UNDP had recruited him. These conditions had also made it difficult for the school to recruit younger academics. The result was the glaring age difference between the senior and junior staff, but credit must be given where it is due. Although the school lost a substantial number of its senior academics, many risked their lives and stayed. The list of those who stayed and braved it is long; but at the risk of inadvertently leaving out some, I will mention just a few whom I believe deserve credit for not jumping ship when the going was rough and turbulent.

Professor Jethero Opolot, an education psychologist who I believe started out as a student of Theoretical Physics during his early days at the University of Edinburgh, and served as dean of the school for many years, certainly deserves recognition for holding the fort. The legendary Associate Professor J. C. Sekamwa, an education historian and prolific writer, known to his colleagues simply as JC and who also served two terms as Dean of the School; Professor Jacayo Ociti, who was dean in the 1980s and who later had to defend the name change from Faculty to School of Education in Senate, also deserve an honourable mention.

Associate Professor T. Kalyankolo Mazinga, the education artist; late Professor Kupriyan Odaete, the Comparative Education specialist with a PhD from the University of London, who was instrumental in establishing the collaborative link between the School of Education at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Canada and Makerere University, were all there when the going was at its toughest. Thanks to them, the school survived. In fact, one could say that Professor Odaete had become an icon and a patriarch in the Department of Educational Foundations and Management where he had been head for as long as one could remember. Mathew Odada – the Social Studies man, one of the brave academics who never saw age as an impediment to one's academic and professional advancement. He obtained his PhD, under the Alberta-Makerere collaboration in 1995 at quite an advanced age when most of us would have thought of throwing in the towel and calling it quits. In fact, his case presented me with an unexpected challenge. According to the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding between the University of Alberta and the Canadian Agency for International Development (CIDA) which was funding the collaboration, I had to guarantee that we would retain him for eight years after his PhD. By then he would be well above the mandatory retirement age of 60 and the contractual age of 65. Somehow, we managed to sort out the problem with the Appointments Board. Fortunately, his research papers were enough and of good quality to qualify him for promotion to the rank of Associate Professor. Mathew Odada symbolised what it meant to
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set oneself a goal and focus on achieving it with single-minded determination, regardless of obstacles, and I admired him for that.

Dr Joseph Nserekho Munakukaama, the Education Philosophy man, was another strong pillar to the school in the days when the future was uncertain. Those who know a little about him and his humble beginnings would tell you that he was a man who bootstrapped himself. Indeed, his last name – Munakukaama – means exactly that and had been the hallmark of his life, which saw him begin his academic career as a teacher – trainee at Busubizi Teacher Training College several decades earlier. He was a truly self-made man and a fine example of that trait which we saw in Mathew Odada. He too registered for the PhD degree at an advanced age, close to his retirement. For him too, age was not an impediment to acquiring knowledge. In spite of the heavy teaching load, he successfully completed his PhD, which was conferred on him in 1998. He later took over from the late Kupriyan Odaet as Head of the Department of Educational Foundations and Management, but because of the new university rules, he could serve only one term. He could not hold the office again because by that time, he was already close to the mandatory retirement age. Time had come for the younger generation of academics who had initially joined the school in trickles, but later in fairly large numbers, to take over leadership. For me, it was more than a personal achievement to have seen so many colleagues who, for reasons not of their own making and whom I believed would never rise beyond where I found them, make such dramatic academic and career turn-arounds.

As I have pointed out, one of the consequences of transforming the Faculty of Education into a School was the creation of more departments. As a result, unrelated disciplines were no longer lumped together. Under the new school structure, it was easy to assign members of staff to disciplines and departments according to their specialisations. As I understood it, Educational Foundations and Management; Education Psychology and Curriculum, Teaching and Media were responsible for the professional aspects of Education as a discipline. Language Education, Science and Technical Education, as well as Social Sciences and Arts Education dealt with methods. Other faculties, the Faculties of Arts, Science, Social Sciences, Economics and Management and Margaret Trowell School of Industrial and Fine Arts, taught most of the content on behalf of the School of Education. However, that was about to change. The school was being asked to teach some of the content as well, which was not a new idea. It had been the subject of several debates long before I took over as Vice Chancellor. However, due to poor staffing in the school at the time and the need to minimise duplication of effort, the idea was shelved. However, the inability of the Faculty of Science to offer Biology as an integrated subject rekindled the debate.

Over the years, the performance in Biology at the Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education (UACE) was steadily declining. The then Minister of
Education, Amany Mushega, was seriously concerned about the consistent high failure and generally poor performance in Biology at the Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education. He wanted to know the cause of the problem and also a workable solution. He asked the university to provide him with an explanation. Our preliminary investigations had traced the problem to the way the Faculty of Science taught the Biological Sciences. As we have seen before, the Faculty of Science did not offer Biology as a subject in its own right. Botany and Zoology were offered as separate subjects. Therefore, a BSc Education student wishing to graduate with Biology as a teaching subject had to continue with Botany and Zoology, combining the two subjects with Education, which for all Education students was a compulsory subject in the second and third years. This would lead to a 3.3.3 subject combination, which was not permitted in the Faculty of Science. The subject combination had to be 3.1.1, 3.2.1 or 3.2.2. The School of Education had two choices: either to admit students who already had a BSc degree in Botany and Zoology to a Postgraduate Diploma in Education as an additional qualification or mount a full-fledged BSc Education course in Biology taught in DOSATE, for the BSc (Biology and Education) students. That meant that besides the Science methods, the Department of Science and Technical Education had to teach content as well. The school settled for that choice.

During my almost eleven years as Vice Chancellor, it was a privilege to see so many young men and women join the academic staff of the school, as well as complete or register for their PhDs, either at Makerere or overseas. No doubt, the Alberta-Makerere linkage, which I found in its infancy, significantly boosted the number of PhDs in the school. The interesting aspect of this collaboration was that the PhD candidates could register as students of the University of Alberta or as Makerere University students. The choice of university was always discussed between students and their supervisors on either side. Those who chose to register at Makerere could travel to Edmonton to undertake advanced courses or use the advanced research facilities at the University of Alberta School of Education. Those who chose to register as students of the University of Alberta University were free to do their thesis research at Makerere. Joint thesis supervision and examining were also strongly encouraged. Thanks to late Professor Odaet’ vision, the relationship turned out to be mutually beneficial and productive. Silas Oluka, who later took over the headship of DOSATE when Jane Mulemwa left the university; the late Richard Akankwasa, who replaced Dr Joseph Nserek in Head of Foundations and Management; E. Olupot; Alice Kagoda and Wycliffe Scott Wafula, not to mention Mathew Odada, also obtained their PhDs under the Alberta-Makerere linkage.

Dr Olupot later resigned from Makerere and joined the new Uganda Martyrs University at Nkozi. Dr Richard Akankwasa (now deceased) left Makerere to take up the new position of Director General of Education at the Ministry of
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Poaching and death notwithstanding, the growing list of new and much younger staff in almost every department was hope for the future of the school. Equally interesting was the increasing number of female members of staff, moreover many of them with PhDs. I was pleasantly surprised to see Dr Rose Nassali join the Department of Educational Foundations and Management after obtaining her PhD from the University of Bristol. In the 1980s, Rose and I were colleagues at Kampala High School where she was Head of English Department while I was a moonlighter. Over the years, I had lost contact with her until she joined the School of Education as a lecturer. Like Richard Akankwasa, she left the university a couple of years later after successfully competing for the new position of Director of the Education Standards Agency in the Ministry of Education and Sports.

Interestingly, while many members of staff were leaving the university for greener pastures, many still found Makerere an attractive place to make a career. Although, calling it “poaching” would be a misnomer, Makerere attracted people from other institutions too. For some reason, both Anglican and Roman Catholic priests found it attractive to teach at Makerere, not only at the Departments of Philosophy and Religious Studies, but also in other departments unrelated to religion. Father Dr Dan Babigumira from the National Major Seminary, Katigondo was a good example of men of God doing “Caesars work” in the School of Education. His presence compensated for the loss of some members of staff through death and poaching. At least, we were sure that the supervision of PhD students registered in the school would continue.

While the school was once again registering increases and had encouraging staff numbers, the ugly hand of death was also at work. Dr Felix Passi, a native of Pekele in Adjumani District, was the first member of staff of the School of Education to die in my early years as Vice Chancellor. He was a brilliant academic who was rising fast through the ranks. Although he was still relatively junior in rank, in late 1991 or early 1992, the Minister of Education Amanya Mushega spotted him and appointed him a member of the university’s Appointments Board. Unfortunately, a few years later after a relatively long illness, he succumbed to the cold hands of death and we lost him. This was another tragedy the university could ill afford. A few years later, the school suffered another blow. Mrs Rhoda Nsibambi had faithfully served the Department of Language Education as an English specialist for over three decades without a break in service. With her husband, Professor Apolo Nsibambi, the two had become an inseparable part of Makerere University. Coming from the Kayanja family, a family blessed with a string of brilliant and highly educated brothers and sisters, Rhoda stood out as a fine example of that breed of Ugandans who chose to serve their country and university amidst incredible difficulties and appalling conditions. I could be wrong, but I have the inkling that the Kayanja Family, more than any family
I could think of in Uganda, has so far had the highest of its members serving Makerere University in both academic and administrative positions. The list includes Rhoda’s elder brother, Professor Frederick Kayanja, who served as Head of Veterinary Anatomy, Dean of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and Deputy Vice Chancellor under Professor George Kirya, before moving to Mbarara in the late 1980s to start the University of Science and Technology, where he was Vice Chancellor for over two decades. Rhoda served as Head of the Department of Language Education for many years and at the time of her death, she had risen to the rank of Associate Professor in the same department. Her younger sister, Mrs Sarah Serufusa, spent most of her working life at Makerere as an administrator, rising to the rank of Deputy University Secretary in charge of the Appointments Board. Their younger brother, Dr James Makumbi, as a consultant physician and later as Superintendent of Mulago Hospital in the 1980s, also taught at the Medical School.

Rhoda Nsibambi died as her husband frantically rushed her from their farm at Buloba along Kampala-Mityana highway to Namirembe Hospital. Sadly, he was unable to save her life. Her sudden death was another devastating blow to her department, the School of Education and the university as a whole. As many testified at her requiem held in Namirembe Cathedral, she was a modest, but elegant lady. She combined her simplicity with brilliance and love for her family, work, colleagues and students. She was an avid lover of flowers, particularly the roses. It was one of those very difficult moments that I found myself least prepared to say something and yet I had to. At sombre occasions like that, it was always hard to find the right words to console the bereaved.

As far as I could remember, the Department of Language Education was one of those departments in the School of Education that had never produced a dean. None of us had expected that a young man would have a crack at it and succeed. Therefore, in 2002 I was in for a surprise, when Dr Connie Masembe Sebbunga, who had joined the Department of Language Education in 1997 after his PhD at the University of Liverpool told me that he believed the time had come for the younger generation to take over the leadership of the school and that he was going to stand for deanship. In the first place, he was relatively new in the school and had just been promoted to the position of Senior Lecturer. Much as I concurred with him that time had come for the younger generation to take over the leadership of the school, I doubted if he stood any chance of winning the confidence and trust of his colleagues. The School of Education had somewhat earned an unenviable reputation of being divided into camps and cliques based on all sorts of loyalties and allegiances. To some, the school was too difficult to govern. Even if he pulled it off, there was the likelihood that he could not last long as Dean. JC Sekamwa had succeeded because, as an old timer, he knew how to navigate the murky waters of the school’s internal micro-politics, but for a
rookie like Dr Sebbunga, one doubted whether he could be able to hold the team cohesively. However, in order not to dampen his morale, I gave him the benefit of doubt, kept my reservations to myself and waited for the outcome, after all deans were not made in heaven. Apparently, the young man had done his homework well. He polled the highest number of the valid votes in the election and his supporters had reason to celebrate, but the difficult part still lay ahead; being able to get the entire school to rally behind him. Against all imaginable odds and in spite of being soft spoken, Masembe succeeded beyond our expectations. As it turned out, his term of office was not just a mere change of guard, he was well focused and knew how to avoid the pitfalls, combined with the determination and the will to succeed. The young man had many good ideas for the school, but as we all know, more often than not, change is a slow process, sometimes painfully slow. So, as his reforms were taking their pace, he soon came under intense pressure from another quarter, the Ministry of Education and Sports that wanted to see serious improvements in the way the school trained teachers.

One of the problems the School of Education faced at the time was its inability to keep pace with the ICT revolution. Right from kindergarten, schools were fast going digital and logging onto the Internet. I used to point out jokingly to JC that if they were not careful, the school risked churning out graduates who were already obsolete before they left the university gates. Our graduate teachers who were computer illiterate and unable to surf the Internet could find themselves in very embarrassing situations. Their students and the public would lose confidence in them and the university that trained them. Therefore, it was time we did something about it. Fortunately help was not far, it was on the way coming, but from an unexpected quarter. When NORAD indicated that it would provide the university with a grant to implement a four-year Institutional Development Programme (IDP), beginning in 2001, the School of Education under JC Sekamwa as dean wrote a proposal to set up an ICT Resource Centre in the school, fully equipped with computers and other modern teaching technologies. Luckily for the school, NORAD accepted to fund the project within the IDP quota. Although the project implementation had a slow start, the school eventually received the necessary funds to set up the centre. I was gratified when I visited the centre to find it fully equipped with new computers and other ICT accessories like LCD projectors. Although the school’s student population far outnumbered the available computers at the centre, half a loaf was most certainly a preferred option. Now students had a chance to try their hands on the keyboard. JC Sekamwa, who started it all and Masembe Sebbunga who took over from him when we had started implementing the project, had a good reason to smile when the lab was handed over to the school.

The annual school practice (or teaching practice as many called it) was another big challenge that the school had to contend with every year. In fact, school
practice was one of the University Bursar’s worst nightmares, because it was an expensive exercise with a budget running into hundreds of millions of shillings annually. With all the budget cuts, it was always next to a miracle for the Bursar to raise enough money to cover both students and supervising staff expenses for the exercise to start on time. If the Bursar was not able to raise the money in time for the exercise, which used to commence in late June or early July, the chances were that the schools would close for the second holiday of the year before the students were ready to go. Therefore, the timetable was always tight. I must admit that I also dreaded this time of the year. I could not imagine the Education students missing their teaching practice because we had failed to find the money. No amount of explanation could satisfy anybody, let alone the students who would see it as an opportunity to accuse the university administration of corruption.

Money had to be found and students had to receive their allowances in full. The supervising staff too expected to be paid and provided with transport in order to be able to visit and assess their students, who were scattered all over the country. Because of its sensitive nature, Ben Byambabazi had learnt to plan for it well ahead of time. That was the only time of the year we had to suspend payment for the non-essential goods and services. As my born-again Christian friends would say, by the Grace of God, for all the time I was there as Vice Chancellor, we never failed to find the money for the teaching practice. Much as we struggled hard to make sure that the money for the exercise was promptly available, we also wanted to ensure that it was not misused.

This was also the busiest time of the year for the University Internal Auditor, James Kabatangale and the resident Auditor General’s staff. Over the years, a limited budget had forced the school to restrict the exercise to secondary schools close to the university, which meant that the school practice was confined to schools only in and around Kampala, majority of them being privately owned. Transportation for the supervising staff was a challenge, as it was expensive to convey supervisors on long distances from Kampala. However, with good planning, we could occasionally raise enough money for students to undertake their school practice upcountry and to facilitate the supervisors to reach them.

The perennial school practice challenges forced us to rethink the whole exercise. I began to wonder whether we could not put the millions of shillings we spent on transportation every year to better use. Borrowing a leaf from other faculties like Agriculture, I thought that it would make more sense to use the money to buy a fleet of vehicles for the school that staff could use to visit students on school practice. After all, for all its size, age and school practice responsibilities, the School of Education was one of the few faculties in the university which did not have a vehicle of its own. It was an idea that I had unsuccessfully floated before I retired from the university. As we examined its feasibility, we soon ran into some serious problems. The first obstacle was how to convince the Ministry
of Finance to let us the use money which the Uganda Parliament had voted for the university’s recurrent budget money for a capital expenditure. Secondly, the Government had long stopped allocating money to the university for capital development budget; so, much as the idea of buying a fleet of vehicles for the school made sense, it was difficult to spin. Another option would have been for the school to use its internally generated revenue, but that too had its own problems. The idea had to be shelved. However, under the NORAD-funded IDP, the school bought a small vehicle. As far I could remember, that was the school’s first vehicle. It was not much of a significant event to celebrate, but for me, thanks to NORAD, it was certainly a step in the right direction.

Another problem related to the school’s capacity to supervise large numbers of students effectively. There were even allegations that some students went through their teaching practice without being assessed, because of insufficient supervisors to reach them, and yet the school practice marks counted towards students’ final assessment. That was worrisome and a cause for serious concern. One way the school confronted the problem of the shortage of supervisors was to engage members of staff from other university units, who were qualified teachers to assist with supervision and assessment. The down side of this practice was that other university work remained unattended to for the time these members of staff were away, supervising school practice. Besides, much as the selected members of staff had qualifications in Education, they were no longer practising teachers, so they lacked classroom exposure. From that point of view, we tried hard to discourage the practice with limited success. There had to be an innovative way of giving students effective supervision. JC Sekamwa had an idea.

As we shall see later, when we launched the – HYPERLINK “mailto:I@mak.com” – I@mak.com, education was one of the areas of focus for the capacity-building programme in the decentralised districts. JC Sekamwa was invited to serve on the programme’s Steering Committee in his capacity as Dean of the School of Education. Successfully and unsuccessfully, the School of Education submitted many projects proposals to the committee for funding. JC Sekamwa’s Co-operating Teachers project was among the successful ones. His idea was to enlist good practising teachers around the country and put them through an intensive induction programme that would equip them with the school practice supervising and assessment skills. The next step was to send the Education students to those secondary schools where the cooperating teachers were teaching. The cooperating teachers would take over from there. There was, therefore, no need for tutors from the School of Education to visit these students except for the occasional quality control check to ensure they were supervising and assessing the students according to the set standards. At the end of the exercise, the cooperating teachers would submit their assessment reports with grades for every student they had supervised to the School of Education. JC Sekamwa, a man who spoke
English with a heavy Luganda accent, had stumbled on a simple, yet elegant and effective solution to a long-standing problem. I actually wondered why we had never thought of it before. It also cost the university less money. Sekamwa’s idea was the whole essence of the philosophy – innovation. After the pilot phase, the next challenge Sekamwa faced was to scale up his successful experiment. Unfortunately, both of us retired from the university service before the rollout was implemented.

As I concluded my visit to the School of Education, I was happy to see the Department of Language Education and the university as whole putting emphasis on the importance of local languages. Dr Masagazi-Masaazi had the rare privilege of being the first student to register for a PhD in Luganda at Makerere and being allowed to write most of his thesis in Luganda. Dr Masagazi-Masaazi graduated in October 2004. It was also equally gratifying for me to see several female members of staff in the school register and obtain their PhDs. Dr Robinnah Kyeyune in Language Education; Dr Mary Goretti Nakabugo of the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Media, one of the few students who studied for the Master of Philosophy degree at the University of Cape Town under the USHEPiA programme and graduated 1998 with a distinction; Dr Mary Ochung of Curriculum Teaching and Media, who obtained her Master of Philosophy Degree from Makerere in March 2004, just to mention a few. In fact, Dr Kyeyune had an added responsibility. After the death of Dr Kasalina Matovu, she took over the management of the Rockefeller Foundation-funded, “Minds Across” project. I vividly recall her impressive presentation at Nakaseke Teachers’ College in 2003, when Dr Gordon Conway, the former President of the Foundation, paid a short visit on his third trip to Makerere. It is also fair to mention the two colleagues, who were with me at ITEK. The first is Maurice Tamale of the Social Sciences and Arts Education Department.

As a new principal who was taking over a volatile institution, Maurice Tamale was one of the few members of staff who helped me to learn more about the inner workings of ITEK and staff politics there. After his MA at the University of Indiana in the USA, I was happy to see him graduate with a PhD at Makerere in March 2000, together with Andrew Cula who was then one of the university’s Deputy Registrars. I was happy to meet young H. Okurut in South Africa in 2003, working on his PhD at the University of the Western Cape under Makerere University sponsorship, as well as partially-sponsored Jane Kaahwa who did her PhD in Mathematics Education at the University of Birmingham in the UK. Drs Muhanguzi, J. Oonyu and Sikoyo Namarome and many more I have not been able to mention here were indeed welcome additions to the growing pool of PhDs in the school. Another defector Makerere scooped from ITEK was Raphael Oryem of the Department of Science and Technical Education, a Nairobi University graduate in Agriculture. It was also sad to see veterans such as Dr Paul Balyejjusa, who had served as Associate Dean of the School for a number of years and the
school’s long member of staff, JC Sekamwa, retire from service. The school had already lost Reverend Tumwesigye, who had also served as Associate Dean while doubling as Deputy Chaplain of St Francis Chapel and lecturer in Religious Study methods. He resigned from the university service and established a church of his own. Before I left the university, he was thinking of saving some money to construct a few new buildings. The dome-shaped conference room behind the school’s main building was the only largest teaching facility it had, with a seating capacity of not more than 500 people. It surely was in need of additional space in view of the rising student numbers.

Institute of Psychology – Old Wine in New Barrels?

I think it is fair to say that ever since Psychology in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Education Psychology merged under the umbrella of the Department of Education Psychology in the then Faculty of Education, the co-existence had never been a cosy one. To make matters worse, this big department was crammed in two small old tin-roofed single-storeyed bungalows, situated between the School of Education proper and the former Centre for Continuing Education. I must admit that for all the years I was at Makerere, I never figured out the real reasons for the merger. According to the popular version, the powerful Professor Drujayire, the Nigerian education psychologist who was then Head of Education Psychology, just bulldozed the merger through Senate and Council, and indeed the department bore the hallmarks of a marriage of convenience.

In fact, as far as I could make out, there seemed to be a feeling amongst the pure psychologists, such as Professor Munene, that Education Psychology was restricting the advancement of the discipline of Psychology at Makerere. These feelings had slowly translated into outright frustration. My interactions with some of the pure psychologists in the department had left me in no doubt that they were resentful of being under the ambit of Education Psychology. Surprisingly, the uneasy calm between the two factions persisted for several years without erupting into outright hostilities. In fact, the departmental headship vacillated between Professor John Munene, a pure psychologist who the education psychologists considered an outsider, and Professor Jethero Opolot who, after the departure of Drujayire and Barnabas Otala, had become the guru of Education Psychology at Makerere. It seemed to me that the pure psychologists considered themselves as the legitimate specialists and the education psychologists as just end-users of the discipline. They believed that the university made a big mistake to have lumped them together under one roof. Apparently, the battle lines had long been drawn and the handwriting was now on the wall for all to see. It was clear that it was just a matter of time before the department split up and the two groups went their separate ways. However, it did not happen quite that way, thanks to Professor Munene’s innovative idea.
Although the Department of Education Psychology had no students of its own, an interesting aspect of the discipline was the ease with which it fitted into the subject combinations of other faculties such as Arts, Science and Social Sciences, and even Medicine in the later years. Psychology rescued many students in the Faculties of Arts, Science and Social Sciences, who would otherwise have had a hard time finding the right subject combinations in their first and second years. In fact, it was normal for students registered in any of the three faculties to end up with Psychology as a single-subject honours degree – the BA or BSc 3.1.1 combination. While Dr James Sengendo was keen to re-establish Psychology as a Department in the Faculty of Social Sciences, Professor Oswald Ndolerire of Arts too was thinking along similar lines. However, the University Council was not in the mood to listen to the two deans debating which of the two faculties should host the re-established Department of Psychology. John Munene beat them to it and helped break the impasse. Instead of a department, he suggested an autonomous Institute of Psychology. When he floated the idea for the first time, my immediate reaction was whether the School of Education would let go one of its core departments and if it did, whether it would be possible to get the proposal through Senate and Council. However, like Dr David Matovu, the former Chairman of the University Council, I hated to nip a good idea in the bud. John Munene had gone to a great length to write a well-argued proposal that both Senate and Council could buy into. Much as we had to guard against over-fragmentation of academic units, Munene’s idea gave us the best way forward. All we had to do was to get the proposed institute through the approval processes. Good paper work, some legwork and prior planning did the trick. The University Council approved the transformation of the Department of Education Psychology into an autonomous Institute of Psychology with Education Psychology as one of the four departments.

As we celebrated the coming into existence of the new institute, it soon dawned on us that operationalising it would present a formidable challenge. To start with, the School of Education had no Department of Education Psychology of its own. It would have to outsource the teaching of this very important discipline from the Institute of Psychology over which it had no control, and we could not help wondering whether we had actually done the right thing. In fact, as the proposed institute went through the various stages of approval, the School of Education had strongly voiced the concern about what it saw as an anomaly, but it was perhaps too early to pass judgement. After all, both Senate and Council had considered the merits and demerits of setting up an Institute of Psychology as opposed to the creation of two separate departments, one in Education and the other either in the Faculty of Arts or Social Sciences. In any case, nothing was cast in stone; the decisions could change if for some reason at a future date things failed to work out as planned. The authorities that had created it reserved the powers to reverse their decisions when they had reason to believe they were not working in anybody’s interest.
The second obstacle was leadership. Right from the beginning, we were optimistic that Professor John Munene, the initiator of the idea, would also be the founder and director of his brainchild. He had all the hallmarks of what it took to get the young institute off the ground. Unfortunately, when the position was offered to him, he declined the appointment. At the time the University Council approved the institute, Professor Munene had moved over to MISR as Acting Director after the departure of Professor Apolo Nsibambi. According to the new regulations which the University Council had recently passed, Professor Opolot, who would have been Munene’s replacement was age-barred for the position. Worse still, the institute had no other senior members of staff to fall on. I began to worry that, without the leadership of the two most senior members of staff, there was the danger that the institute would be stillborn. As a way of salvaging the delicate situation, we requested Dr Vicky Owens to step in temporarily as Acting Director. We were convinced that although she was still at the rank of Lecturer, being an American as well as an outsider, she would quickly be able to rally all her colleagues around the complex job of operationalising the new institute.

There were new departments to set up; new curricula to develop and write; staff of the former Department of Education Psychology to distribute within the four departments according to their specialisation and new ones to recruit; students to consider for admission and a multitude of other equally important things which could not be put off for too long. Reverend Dr Owens, a native of the Washington State on the West Coast of USA, came to Makerere in the 1990s as a volunteer. I believe she liked what she saw at Makerere and decided to stay. For a while, under her leadership, the institute seemed to be on the right track. We were pleased with what we saw and heard, but little did we know that not all was going quite as well as we had assumed. It seemed that the old dark forces that had bedevilled the old Department of Education Psychology were at work again.

Hardly a year had passed when I received a petition from the staff. They wanted to meet the university administration and discuss the institute’s leadership problems, so we agreed to meet them and hear their grievances. During the meeting held in the Council Room, they made it clear that they were discontented with Dr Owen’s leadership and wanted an immediate change. Given the fact that the institute had been in existence for a few months, I was not too keen to accept their demands. However, in order not to derail the young institute and because Dr Owens had also indicated that she had no desire to continue as director, we accepted their demands. Although the leadership change we were about to make would still be in an acting capacity, we decided to let them choose the person they wanted to lead them until they were in position to elect a substantive director. The choice went to Dr Jane Nambi, who had returned with a PhD from Florida. She accepted to take on the responsibility,
but I guess she did so reluctantly. Then in 2001, we decided that it was time for
the institute to have a substantive Director. Dr Peter Baguma, who had done his
PhD in Vienna a few years earlier and had earned the promotion to the rank of
Senior Lecturer, emerged the candidate of choice. Soon after the election, the
University Appointments Board confirmed him as the first substantive Director
of the Institute for a four-year term. Unfortunately for him too, the honeymoon
was short-lived. He was another causality of what we feared was becoming an
endemic leadership problem in the young institute.

The problems the institute was facing appeared to be getting out of control,
which called for immediate corrective actions. To get to the root cause of the
problems, in 2003 we set up a Committee of Inquiry chaired by Professor David
Bakibinga, formerly the Dean of Law and later Deputy Vice Chancellor for
Finance and Administration. Their task was to carry out an in-depth investigation
and make recommendations on the best way forward. In particular, we wanted
the committee to investigate in detail the alleged sexual harassment of female
students; the disappearance of answer scripts of the female students who had had
rebuffed the sex advances and the withholding of marks by some male members
of staff. To facilitate a fair investigation, I asked Dr Peter Baguma to step down
as director until the committee had completed its work. Since the investigations
involved all staff in the institute, in the interim, we requested Dr Masembe
Sebbunga, Dean of Education to act as the institute’s director too. Worse still, the
School of Education had also started agitating for the separation of Education
Psychology from the institute on the account of the poor services the institute
was providing to the school. To say the least, I found the whole idea of subjecting
the new institute to a full-scale investigation painful, but we were left with no
option. It was the only sure way we could get to the root-cause of the problems
in the hope of finding a satisfactory solution.

My colleague, Professor Epelu Opio, who had become a regular visitor to the
institute as we grappled with the problems and who for a while acted as the de facto
Director of the Institute, kept reminding me that it was high time we investigated
the unending problems at the institute. When the committee completed what
was really a thorough investigation, some of the findings contained in the report
made shocking reading. The committee adduced sufficient evidence to prove
beyond reasonable doubt that indeed the sexual harassment accusations were not
mere allegations against difficult male lecturers by disgruntled female students,
who had tried and failed to get free marks, but were indeed true. Several female
students whom a particular lecturer had victimised for refusing to give in to his
demands, came forward this time and gave evidence to the committee in tears.
As the committee observed, some of the girls whom he tried to seduce but who
turned him down paid a heavy price for being uncooperative. As a punishment,
he withheld their examination marks, claiming that he did not receive their
answer scripts. That way, he made sure they did not graduate. When his name
came up in the committee’s report, I was surprised but not terribly shocked. However, my colleagues, who had no background information on him found the revelation utterly shocking. I recall that a year or so earlier, Dean JC Sekamwa and I had met with this member of staff in my office to talk about the same issue after I had received unconfirmed reports from the School of Education, alleging that he was demanding sexual favours from girls in exchange for marks. Although no one was able to come forward with evidence to incriminate him, we thought that the allegations against him were serious enough to warrant talking to him to clear the air. As Sekamwa and I expected, he went to great length to deny any wrongdoing, but I was not fully convinced. We reprimanded him and warned him of the serious consequences to his career as a lecturer at Makerere if ever the allegations turned out to be true in future. As I ended the meeting, I asked JC Sekamwa to keep a close watch on him. Apparently, our warning and counselling went unheeded. The man was irredeemable. Here was a psychologist who could not overcome his addiction to sex; a predator that was preying on girls, some of whom were young enough to be his daughters. His associates, who knew him well, had long formed the opinion that the man had become a sex maniac and perhaps needed help.

The committee recommended that he should be relieved of his duties and dismissed from the university service for soiling the reputation of the university. After studying the report, the first thing we focused on was to make sure we retrieved all the missing scripts and marks from him so that the affected students could graduate. Amazingly, he had most of them. Later, as was our usual practice, we prepared a charge sheet and invited him in my office to respond to the committee’s findings. This time, he grudgingly admitted he had a problem. At about this time, I was preparing to hand over to the new Vice Chancellor, so I did not conclude the case. I left it to the incoming Vice-Chancellor to take it to its logical conclusion. I must admit that much as what this man did was despicable and unforgivable, I could not help thinking about the resources the university had invested in him. He obtained his PhD from the University of Alberta under the CIDA-sponsored Alberta-Makerere linkage. It was also painful to see a fellow compatriot, who hailed from a region of our country which was grossly under-represented on the Makerere staff, messing himself up and leaving the university service as a disgraced man. On the other hand, I could not excuse him for subjecting his victims to such a psychological torture and the trauma they had to endure. I think I had reason to believe that the man was both a sex maniac and a sadist.

Besides this bad case, the committee uncovered other problems. Some members of staff had turned what were supposed to be institutional projects into private business for private gain, but using university facilities to run them. Some senior members were hardly ever in the institute; they were busy elsewhere most of the time, while others were guilty of encouraging cliques and fomenting antagonism among staff. In the midst of these teething problems that needed
urgent action, the committee recommended the appointment of Professor John Munene as Director with immediate effect. This time around, he did not need much persuasion; he accepted the challenge, but the appointment had to wait for the new Vice Chancellor. Dr Masembe Sebbunga continued to run both the School of Education and the institute until I left. The other senior person, Mrs Kiziri Mayengo, who we would have called upon to act in case Professor Munene was not still interested in the job, was away in the USA trying to register for her PhD at Howard University in Washington DC. The committee also discovered that an expatriate member of staff of Indian origin, whom the institute had recruited from Utrecht in the Netherlands on local terms, had no qualification in Psychology. Interestingly, this man had been a promising and an active member of staff, attending conferences all over the world and presenting papers. He even made contacts with the Indian High Commission in Uganda to solicit Indian scholarships for staff development and funding to help the young institute. We had no reason to doubt his qualifications. Before we had had a chance to investigate him, the man mysteriously disappeared from the university, leaving us with an unsolved puzzle. However, on a positive note, I was encouraged by the large number of young and promising men and women joining the staff of the institute. In spite of the aforementioned problems which we were trying to solve, the institute now appeared set on the right track again.

Fortunately, at the time of my departure from the university, we had managed to stabilise the situation, thanks to Professor Epelu Opio and Dr Masembe Sebbunga, Professor Bakibinga and his committee, as well as the cooperation we received from staff. The institute developed new undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, such as the Bachelor of Community Psychology, a Postgraduate Diploma in Counselling; the MSc in Clinical Psychology; the MA in Counselling; the Master of Organisational Psychology and the Master of Education in Education Psychology. It had also started registering students of its own, as well as international scholars like Dr Helen Liebling from the UK, who came as a volunteer on a Makerere local contract but later had to go back to Britain to complete her PhD in Clinical Psychology. Even after completing her PhD, with an appointment at University of Warwick at Coventry, she kept coming back. Failure to provide the institute with new buildings is something I deeply regret. For lack of money, the best we did was to allocate the institute another adjacent old building, previously occupied by the School of Postgraduate Studies before the school moved into the new Senate House.

Margaret Trowell School of Industrial and Fine Arts – Art: The Thumbprint of Ancient and Modern Day Civilisations

When I was still at Namilyango College as a young schoolboy in the 1960s, I fancied the day I would become a prominent artist like Professor Todd, Professor
Managing and Transforming an African University

Kingdon, Gregory Maloba and Sam Ntiro, who at the time were teaching in the college’s famous Art School. I believed I had some talent which needed sharpening before I could make a name for myself. Interestingly, I enjoyed painting landscapes. The Art teacher at Namilyango at the time, Mr Weatherbay, was a good teacher and we liked him for that, although he could be a bit of an eccentric character too. Unfortunately, two things happened in my life at that early age. First, I discovered the beauty of Science. Secondly, towards the end of Senior Three, every student had to make a choice of the subjects he would register for the Cambridge School Certificate, which were not supposed to be more than nine. Art and English Literature were mutually exclusive. You had to choose one or the other. I chose Art, but for some reason, the Headmaster ended up registering me for Literature, which I hated. I hated cramming and memorising that ancient Shakespearean linguistic form, moreover much of it was written in antiquated English. In fact, I had been attending Art classes instead for a good part of my Senior Four until one day the new Ugandan Art teacher, who had taken over from Mr Weatherbay, drew my attention to the fact that I was in the wrong class. When I complained, the Headmaster confessed that he realised he had registered me for Literature by mistake, but it was too late to change. The papers had already gone to the Cambridge University Examination Syndicate. That was the end of my career as a budding artist! Nevertheless, my Art teacher was also puzzled why the mistake and sad to see me give up the subject because of a mix-up in the Headmaster’s office. Although I did not possess the genius of Michelangelo, I am sure I was one of his good students.

The interesting aspect of Art was the fact that if you were exceptionally good at it, you would join Makerere after the Cambridge School Certificate, the equivalent of today’s Uganda School Certificate, for a two-year Diploma in Art, which for purposes of graduate training was the equivalent of a first degree. You did not have to wait for another two years struggling with the Higher School Certificate, popularly referred to as HSC at the time, before you entered university. Moreover, with a good Diploma, a student would register straight away for the MA in Fine Art and many did. This was an added attraction. The BA degree programme in Fine Art began in the 1970/71 academic year, the same year I entered the university. My old friends Simon Sagala, Fred Ibanda and Joseph Mungaya Kebengwa, my schoolmate at Gaba Primary School and at St Peter’s Nsambya, were among the pioneers on the BA programme.

Fine Art at Makerere has an interesting and humble beginning. The teaching of the subject started as a hobby in the house of Margaret Trowell in 1927, five years after Makerere College had opened. Subsequently, when the college formalised the teaching of Art as an academic subject, the Art School was named after its founder, Mrs Margaret Trowell. For years, the School has been one of the leading training institutions for Arts in Uganda and beyond. It has also had an impressive
list of great artists on its teaching staff over the years. People like Kakooza Kingdon and Gregory Maloba designed and sculptured the 1962 “Mother and Child” independence monument, now located in the Kampala Sheraton Hotel gardens. When the newly founded Bank of Uganda was moving into its new premises, it commissioned Makerere’s Kakooza to design and fabricate the terracotta motif, depicting the Central Bank’s logo, which adorns the front courtyard of the older Banks building on Kampala Road. However, like other departments in the university, the school did not escape the ravages of the 1970s. Most of the good artists left, but thanks to Professor Todd’s hard work, the school endured and continued to produce good artists. Besides building a robust school, Professor Todd designed the current Makerere University logo. The original logo is in the Vice Chancellor’s office.

In spite of the cultural importance of Art and its aesthetic attraction, the school has continued to operate from the same old premises in the older wing of the university, close to the School of Education. In fact, its Art Gallery is a centre of attraction for many foreign visitors to Uganda, who appreciate and enjoy Art. During my time as Vice Chancellor, I attended many staff and student annual exhibitions there and I could see the public interest they generated. However, the near dilapidated buildings and heavily potholed access road to the school were always an eye sore and a depressing sight whenever I visited it. But what cheered me up was the reawakening of my interest in Fine Art. Before Government stopped funding the university’s capital development budget, I was optimistic that in time, we would be able to give the school’s old but historical buildings a facelift, we even prepared the bills of quantities. Sadly, all hopes of ever doing it in my time evaporated when the Ministry of Finance stopped allocating money to the university for construction and rehabilitation. Knowing the value many of our European development partners attached to Arts, I tried hard to interest some of them in the school’s rehabilitation without success. I guess that much as they realised the importance of Art and its cultural value, they were not convinced that it was one of the many university’s priorities worth investing in. This was something we had to do ourselves.

I toyed with the idea of using part of our internally-generated income to do something for the school, but because of the many competing demands on the limited resources, I failed too, and the University Secretary and Bursar could not find the money in the budget. It was time for me to admit failure. I had to resign to the fact that I would not be able to raise funds to give the Margaret Trowell School of Fine Art the kind of facelift it deserved before I stepped down as Vice Chancellor. That was the hard reality I had to accept and live with for the rest of my time as Vice Chancellor. However, while I was lamenting my failure, the school managed on its own to fix a few problems from its meagre internally-generated income. The problem the Dean faced was the enormity of the task.
Our calculations had shown that it required over a billion shillings, which at the time was equivalent to one million US dollars, to rehabilitate the school to acceptable standards. The Dean could not raise that kind of money from the school’s modest income, much of which came from the few fee-paying students the school had.

Makerere’s beauty as a community, and perhaps its curse too, was its relatively small size; the entire main campus was only about 300 acres. As people living together in a tightly knit community, we knew each other fairly well, even colleagues we had little in common with academically. Therefore, it was not surprising that I knew several colleagues teaching at the School of Fine Art quite well. Professor Francis Naggenda was one of such colleagues. I believe I came to know him in the 1980s when he had returned to Uganda after many years of exile in Germany as a student, and at the University of Nairobi. Those who had the enviable privilege of a close encounter with him attested to the beauty of his daughters. Unfortunately, he lost one of them in Russia where she had been a student. Although an accomplished artist, he was an all-rounder and a very pleasant person. As I became more acquainted with him, I discovered that he had many interesting research ideas he wanted me to work on with him. One of his many interests was the naturally occurring inorganic pigments, particularly some of the oxides found in local stones. He believed he could use them in high temperature ceramic work as substitutes for the imported glazes, and he thought that as a chemist, I could be of some help in that area. Plant resins, the eucalyptus tree resin in particular, were another area of his research interest. Poor equipment, lack of money and the daily struggle for survival at the time rendered our collaboration ineffective. We had no other choice but to shelve the work indefinitely. When I moved into administration, and he into other equally exciting things to experiment with, including welded scrap steel sculpture, we could hardly find time to resume this work. Later I was pleased to see him rise through the ranks to full Professor, but saddened to see him retire from Makerere. He was perhaps best remembered for the “War Victim” piece in the Main Library, which he carved out of an old tree trunk he found around the premises of the school, and which the Rockefeller Foundation commissioned. “Mother with Baana” is another enchanting sculpture he carved in collaboration with Professor Tuck Langland of Indiana University, South Bend.

As I have pointed out earlier, Professor Kirya’s idea of electing Deans and Heads of Departments enabled us to discover the hidden leadership talents many of our colleagues possessed. As Deans and Heads of Departments came and went, you could clearly see the naturally talented leaders, those who were struggling, and outright flops. For as long I could remember, the Margaret Trowell School of Fine Art used to be a one-department faculty and pure Art in its fine form was the only thing taught there. However, shortly before I left for ITEK, Pilkington
Sengendo, brother to Professor Apolo Nsibambi, took over as Dean of the School and, if you were one of those who subscribed to the school of thought that university dons were by nature conservative, P. N. Sengendo was about to prove you wrong. Although not as charismatic as his elder brother, Apolo, apparently he had big and innovative ideas which would fundamentally change the school and its entire philosophy for the foreseeable future. His first act as Dean was reforming the old curriculum with an injection of a bigger dose of the applied aspects of the discipline. He was keenly interested in emphasising the wide and daily applications of Art; its industrial application in particular. To this end, Industrial Art became an integral part of the school’s new curriculum. To reflect the change in the mandate, the school was renamed Margaret Trowell School of Industrial and Fine Arts. I remember some members in Senate fiercely contesting the retention of Margaret Trowell in the new school’s name. They unsuccessfully argued that it was about time Makerere University dropped some of its colonial hangovers, but Sengendo and his colleagues stood their ground, refusing to back off. He insisted that retaining the name Margaret Trowell had nothing to do with “colonial hangovers” as some Senators wanted everyone to believe. The school was simply paying a debt of gratitude to its founder, who unfortunately happened to be a British. They had made their case, Senate was convinced and Sengendo carried the day.

Not only did the School modify its name, the name of the degree was also changed from Bachelor of Arts in Fine Art (BA Fine Art) to Bachelor of Industrial and Fine Arts (BIFA). The change was as fundamental as that. Subjects like Business Administration, Marketing, Finance and Banking, Applied Design, Jewellery, Photography, Industrial Ceramics and many more found their way into the new BIFA degree curriculum and for the first time, industrial attachment – undertaken in the recess term of the second year – became a compulsory requirement which the School’s undergraduate students had to fulfil before they could graduate.

Be that as it may, more change was on the way. For the first time in its long history, the University Council agreed to departmentalise the School. Sengendo had asked for more departments, but Senate recommended only three, which Council approved for a start: Painting and Art History, Sculpture, and Industrial Art and Design. Staff had to choose the departments where they wanted to belong or the ones their interests fitted best. P. N. Sengendo and long-serving Ignatius Serulyo ended up in Painting and Art History with young and very smart Francis Xavier Ife, whom I always referred to as FX, as Head of Department. Professor Francis Nnaggenda joined Sculpture with George Kyeyune as the founding Head of Department. The soft-spoken Philip Kwesiga, another young artist, ended up heading the Department of Industrial Art and Design. If I had my way, I would have approved only two departments for the school, one to take care of the more
traditional Fine Art and the other for the Applied Art. However, as it turned out, three were quite adequate for a start and seemed to be a better compromise. The school’s good leadership ensured a flawless transition from a single-department school to one with three separate departments. Also gone were the days when the Head of the School doubled as its Dean. Under the new structure, the school ran as any other Faculty in the University with the Office of the Dean separate from that of the Heads of Departments. Unlike the Institute of Public Health where some departments ended up with too few staff after departmentalisation, the school had a reasonable number of staff in each department. Again, tribute was due to the leadership which, even before the University Council agreed to the idea of a departmentalised school, had undertaken a massive staff recruitment drive. I think this was one of Musangogwantaamu’s endearing contribution and a legacy to his tenure as Head of the School before P. N. Sengendo took over.

The staff was a good mix of old timers and new blood and was academically productive. As if by design, during my time, the school was one of the faculties that boasted of a large number of women on its staff list. In fact, by the time I left the University, Mrs Josephine Wannyana Mukasa had taken over from P. N Sengendo as Dean of the faculty. Being an America-trained artist, who started out as a teacher at Makerere College School before joining the Margaret Trowell School of Industrial and Fine Arts, some of her colleagues had objected to her promotion to Senior Lecturer. However, the Appointments Board was satisfied that she merited the promotion. Soon after her promotion, she was elected Dean of the School. As far as I can recall, she was the third woman to be elected to the position at Makerere after Teresa Kakooza of the Institute of Adult and Continuing Education and Joy Kvesiga of Social Sciences respectively.

When the University Council enacted a policy which fixed the PhD degree or its equivalent as the minimum qualification for one to be a lecturer at Makerere, the debate whether members of staff teaching in professional faculties should be required to have one began, and continued to rage on. As far as I can recall, the Faculty of Medicine was the first to raise objection to the new policy but later backed off. The School of Industrial and Fine Arts followed suit. Some of the more senior staff argued that a PhD was not necessary for the artists. According to some of them, artists needed professional qualifications and fellowships of learned societies, such as the Fellowship of the Royal College of Art of the UK. Though seemingly convincing, both Senate and Council did not buy into the arguments and continued to insist on applying the new rule uniformly across board. While some of the more senior members of staff in the school wanted to continue with the fight, the younger ones were not convinced the fight would serve any useful purpose, after all none of those who were vehemently opposed to the new policy had been admitted to the Fellowship of the Royal College of Art. Instead, the younger staff chose to prepare for the new reality of a PhD or its equivalent.
At about the same time, the school entered into what turned out to be an interesting and helpful relationship with the Middlesex University in the UK. The collaboration was spearheaded on the UK side by Professor Gale, who had been acting as the school’s external examiner for a couple of years. Philip Kwesiga, Vivian Nakazibwe and one or two other members of staff were the first to register for their PhDs at the Middlesex University under the Makerere-Middlesex linkage, sponsored by the Staff Development Fund. Incidentally, over the years, young Lillian Nabulime of the Department of Sculpture had made a name for herself as a sculptor. I remember the University of Bergen inviting her to exhibit some of her works there. Every time I visited the School, I found her works, which were fascinating on display. She had a way of turning ugly tree stumps and roots into beautiful works of art. When the new policy requiring every academic member of staff to have a PhD or a higher doctorate came into force, in 1998, she decided to study for the degree at the University of Newcastle. Unfortunately, the premature death of her husband was a serious setback for her, but she was strong enough to overcome the tragedy that had befallen her and continued with her studies.

While a few members of staff decided to study abroad for their PhDs, others registered at Makerere. In 1996, Brother Peter Andrew Yiga of the Department of Painting and Art History made history by becoming the first member of staff to graduate with a PhD in Fine Art from Makerere. I believe he was the second member of staff to hold a PhD degree in Art after Reverend Kefa Sempangi, who had to flee the country during the Idi Amin era. The difference was that Kefa Sempangi obtained his PhD abroad after he had left Makerere and never came back to teach at the school. After Brother Yoga’s triumph and the University Council’s insistence on having the PhD, every member of staff wanted to obtain a PhD. Some seized the opportunity to study for it in South Africa when the country opened itself up to the rest of Africa after the end of the apartheid era in 1994.

If someone ever asked me to showcase a truly success story of the university policy based on the famous Mujaju Report, the School of Industrial and Fine Arts would certainly qualify as one of the success stories and would come very close to the top of my list. The mindset turn-around I was witnessing was as unimaginable as it was impressive. I could hardly hide my disbelief when, one day, a senior and long serving member of staff, who had been a staunch proponent of the old school of thought that subscribed to notion that as for artists, a PhD was unnecessary, approached me to help him register for a PhD. I am sure the believers in the Holy Bible are quite familiar with a couple of dramatic stories of latter day converts, St Paul being the most famous of them all.

The sudden upsurge in interest amongst members of staff to go for the PhD was to me the closest you could ever get to the biblical St Paul’s dramatic conversion. However, what I cannot say with absolute certainty is whether divine intervention
had a hand in the conversion of my colleagues to the new thinking. Whatever the forces that were at play, there is no doubt the school had gone through a big paradigm shift. The talk about fellowships of professional organisations as an alternative to the PhD had long been forgotten. Once again, the School of Industrial and Fine Arts had clearly demonstrated that contrary to popular belief, universities are capable of reforming with changing times. Although it would be naïve of me to deny that the new university policy on qualifications had a lot to do with the school’s change of attitude, we could not ignore the staff’s willingness to accept change as an inevitable eventuality; the realisation that after all, what we cherish as our comfort zones is never permanent.

In my considered opinion, the Margaret Trowell School of Industrial and Fine Arts, as a creator and cradle of Uganda’s fine arts, is a university asset worth preserving. It has the potential to attract foreign visitors and African Art collectors from all over the world. Much as we failed to find the money in my time to give the school a good facelift, at some point in future, funds will have to be found to rehabilitate this important School and expand its gallery which attracts several visitors and art admirers during its annual Art Exhibitions. Tribute goes to the many organisations and individuals that have supported the school over the years and, in particular, during my time as Vice Chancellor. For example, shortly before I retired, the Madhavani group of companies made a generous donation of looms to the School to support its new weaving and textile design programme under Mrs Josephine Mukasa. An extra building had to be hurriedly put up to house the looms. In a way, it was a make-shift little building. Besides this small building the school had to put up in a haste to accommodate the looms, the University Council allocated a nearby staff house to the Jewellery section. This house needed a facelift too, which we could not do at the time. Today, graduates of the new school’s programmes are now better placed to start businesses of their own as jewellery designers and makers, textile designers, commercial artists and so on. The school had transitioned Art from pure aesthetics to other equally gainful and important applications. No doubt, in spite of these impressive achievements, a few problems cropped up from time to time. For instance, once it was alleged that some senior members of staff had secretly sold off the school’s art works abroad for their personal gains. Upon investigation, we could not substantiate the allegations. There were also occasional personality clashes along religious, and ethnic lines, which almost tore the school apart. Fortunately, the situation began to change with the recruitment of a younger crop of staff who hailed from all parts of the country.

In spite of the few problems and setbacks, the school made progress during my time as Vice Chancellor. I must say that I regretted the fact that some long serving members of staff failed to qualify for promotion when they should have. There were various reasons why they failed to make the grade, but failure to produce
and exhibit new works was one of them. That was the assessors’ verdict and there was little I could do about it beyond the Appointments Board informing the affected members of staff why their application for promotion was unsuccessful. Apparently, for an academic artist, producing new works and exhibiting them on a regular basis is critically essential for career development. At Makerere, this is the equivalent of a paper in a peer-reviewed journal or a book publication.

**Faculty of Law – The Learned Friends Contributing to the Dispensation of Justice and Upholding the Rule of Law**

I believe that Law is one of the most misunderstood professions or, more precisely, the misperceived profession. The wrong perception seems to stem from the fact that for some people, it is simply inconceivable for a person who was neither an eyewitness nor a party to a crime when it was committed to stand up in court to defend an alleged criminal. In the minds of others, lawyers are “liars” who lie for a fee. Some even go further to allege that lawyers are employed to confuse witnesses in order to win cases in the courts. In my view, this is the worst kind of stigmatisation of such a noble profession. Those who see lawyers as professional crooks overlook a very simple fact that, in the absence of lawyers, the judicial systems would not exist. To continue to malign lawyers in this fashion negates the fact that proper administration of justice demands that the judicial system works both ways – for the plaintiff and the defendant. The rule of law dictates that the defendant has the same right to legal representation much in the same way as the plaintiff. I guess this is the crux of the matter.

Since the legal profession is an integral part of any modern society, the Government of Uganda was very keen to have Law taught at Makerere in the 1960s when the college was still part of the federal University of East Africa. In this account, we have seen how Kenya and Uganda decided to start their own Law Schools at Nairobi and Makerere respectively, thus bringing to an end the monopoly the University College of Dar es Salaam had enjoyed since the founding of the University of East Africa. From Dar es Salaam to Nairobi and then to Makerere, the Harvard-trained lawyer, Professor Joseph Nume Kakooza, founder Head and first Dean of the faculty, had to endure many difficulties as he struggled to start the Law Department in the Faculty of Social Sciences, which was the fore-runner to the present-day Law Faculty, with a handful of staff. His pioneer students, who had expected to join the University College of Dar es Salaam, were terribly demoralised at how deprived they were in terms of the absence of a library and other learning resources and had to do with the little which was available to them. As it is often said, pioneering has never been easy. I recall a conversation I once had with Professor Kakooza about the many challenges he faced starting the Department of Law. He narrated the tough time some demanding students gave him in spite of his many repeated assurances that, in time, their situation would
only improve. However, despite those rough beginnings, the Law Department rapidly grew to become a full-fledged faculty. Justice Remy Kasule is one of Professor Kakooza’s most successful and outstanding pioneering students, but he was also one of the most demanding ones. We have also seen how Professor Kakooza left the faculty when the Government of the day appointed him as a High Court Judge, leaving it in the hands of, among others, Abraham Kiapi (now deceased) who was a Dar es Salaam and Columbia University-trained lawyer as Dean. Professor Kiapi too left his fingerprints in the young faculty. As Dean in the mid-1970s, Abraham Kiapi was instrumental in moving the young faculty from the small pre-fabricated building behind the Faculty of Arts, which was later allocated to the Institute of Languages, to its present location. In fact, the faculty occupies what used to be the Centre for Continuing Studies headquarters before the latter moved into its present premises, also in the 1970s. It was also during Professor Kiapi’s time as Dean that the Government put a ban on lecturers in the faculty engaging in private practice; a move that saw many promising and upcoming academic lawyers leaving the university. By the time I returned to Makerere in July 1979, Professor Kiapi had handed the leadership of the faculty over to young David Isabirye. Unfortunately, David Isabirye left Makerere in the 1980s and Frederick Jjuuko found himself taking over as Dean.

Dr Khidu Makubuya, who had returned with a Doctor of Jury Sciences from Yale University joined the faculty as a young lecturer at the beginning of the 1980s and quickly rose through the ranks to succeed Fred Jjuuko as the next Dean. At the time, the impression created was that Fred Jjuuko and a few other young lecturers with strong socialist views were indoctrinating the students with the Marxism dogma instead of teaching Law. I recall Jjuuko pointing out during a student function that he was proud that the Faculty had trained lawyers with social consciences. So when Khidu Makubuya took over as Dean, a change from training lawyers with a social conscience was welcomed. However, Khidu’s reign lasted a short time, leading to an upheaval at the faculty. After a showdown with the former Vice Chancellor over the admission of what the faculty believed was an under-qualified student, he resigned. The Vice Chancellor had to identify a new Dean for the Faculty; but after Khidu Makubuya resigned, the Vice Chancellor could not find another member of staff in the faculty willing to succeed him, not even in an acting capacity. In the midst of the stalemate, the University Administration turned to old timer and founder of the faculty, Joseph Nume Kakooza. He was called out of semi-retirement as a Judge and brought back to Makerere to rescue the faculty he had founded more than a decade earlier. As Dean once again, Nume Kakooza quickly proved that he still had what it took to get things done, with a lot of administrative magic left in him. His return to his old faculty as Dean seemed to have calmed the enraged staff. By the time Professor Kakooza left in 1986, the faculty was more or less back on track.
By 1993, the Faculty of Law, which I informally preferred to call the Law School had three departments, namely Public and Comparative Law; Commercial Law; Law and Jurisprudence, as well as the Human Rights and Peace Centre (HURIPEC, as it is popularly called) — a later addition. The HURIPEC building was really the first construction project I handled. At the time, I was a rookie Vice Chancellor on a steep learning curve. HURIPEC was conceived as a joint project between the University of Florida at Gainesville and Makerere University. The cost of the building was also shared between the two universities, with Makerere University Faculty of Law footing the larger portion of the bill. It was the first new building at the Faculty of Law since it moved into the former CCE premises. Although not spectacularly big, it was designed to serve as a multi-purpose building, with lecture halls, offices, a computer laboratory, seminar rooms and residences for visiting professors and other scholars from Florida. In fact, it was a small building designed by a young Irish female volunteer lecturer in the Department of Architecture, who was also the project’s lead architect under the supervision of TECO. I recall the many hours Reverend David Sentongo and I spent pondering over the architectural drawings with her, Dr Barnabas Nawangwe, Professor Peter Schmidt and Professor Naggan – the Florida team leader – and Dean Jjuuko, before we settled on the final design, which the University Council finally approved.

The inauguration ceremony on December 10, 1997 was a grand occasion, with Dr Karerolin Holbrook leading the University of Florida delegation. As the time approached to the opening of the building and the official launch of the Centre, we had to identify a Director. After advertising the position, which attracted even some Ugandan Law Professors teaching at the University of Botswana, the Appointments Board selected Dr Edward Khidu Makubuya as the best candidate and appointed him its first substantive Director. At the time, he had already risen to the rank of Associate Professor.

Unfortunately, he resigned in 2001 and went to participate in the general election of that year. He was elected Member of Parliament and subsequently appointed Minister of State for Luwero Triangle. That marked the end of his almost 15 years as a member of staff of the Makerere Law School. Before his appointment as Director, he had been an active participant in the Florida-Makerere project. Before he resigned, I had known him as a friend for a long time, but had not realised he had a strong calling for politics. At the time he left the university, he was also in charge of the USAID-sponsored Paralegal and Street Law project at the faculty. After his departure, Dr Joe Oloka Onyango took over as Director. The Harvard-trained SJD (Doctor of Juridical Science) lawyer was one of most industrious and illustrious members of staff at Makerere that I had ever met. As Director, he moved the Centre to a higher level. Like the Faculty of Arts, a computer laboratory in the Law School was a novelty in the University
at the time. The ICT revolution had caught up with the learned profession, this
time not in court of law, but where the learned friends-to-be were being taught
the tricks of the trade before they went out to exercise their practice in the real
world.

After the fall of Idi Amin and the relatively short-lived Obote II Government
which took power in the 1980 general elections, the Law School at Makerere
took it upon itself to champion the cause of human rights in the country at the
highest level possible. The human rights crusade attracted allies from near and
far. The University of Florida at Gainesville was an early arrival aboard and a
very active partner in the faculty’s endeavour to bring to the fore the excesses
and abuses that had gone on unabated for so long and, in the process, gave the
subject an intellectual dimension. Then Dr Oloka Onyango, with his strong
background in constitutionalism and ability to write lucidly, was one of the
most ardent proponents of fundamental human rights. In collaboration with
Professors Peter Schmidt and Nagan of South African descent, they founded the
peer-reviewed East African Journal of Human Rights. Besides publishing his own
papers in scholarly journals, Oloka Onyango also co-edited several other works
with distinguished scholars, such as Mahmood Mamdani.

The Centre’s first Director, Dr Khidu Makubuya, besides serving as a member
of the Constitutional Commission that drafted Uganda’s 1995 Constitution under
the leadership of Justice Benjamin Odoki, also served as a member of the Human
Rights Commission. The Government had set up the commission to investigate
the extent of human rights violation and abuse during the regimes of Idi Amin
and Milton Obote. At the time of winding up its work, the commission had
accumulated a wealth of material which the Faculty of Law, with funding from
the USAID, decided to document for proper archiving. The Faculty assigned
the responsibility of coordinating this arduous and gigantic task to Mrs Olivia
Mutibwa, who was then the Deputy University Librarian. Indeed, HURIPEC was
in a way one of Makerere’s unique academic institutes in this respect; apparently
the first of its kind in East Africa. It was also a novel experiment in putting human
rights and peace at the top of the university’s academic and intellectual agenda.

With the introduction of the evening LLB programme in the 1992/93 academic
year, the faculty was suddenly faced with a rapidly growing student population.
The available facilities were beginning to show signs of over-stretching. The
tiny Human Rights and Peace Centre (HURIPEC) building was the only new
structure of the School. The problem of overcrowding needed an urgent solution.
In 1999, the faculty elected Dr Grace Patrick Mukubwa, a first class graduate of
the University of Dar es Salaam, with a JSD from York University as its new Dean.
Dr Mukubwa soon came to grips with the problem and, for him, the solution was
simple. Instead of waiting forever for Government to construct new buildings
for the School, he decided to use part of the internally-generated income for a
new building. The idea was not entirely strange; the faculty had co-financed the HURIPEC building. Much as it sounded a brilliant idea, some members of staff questioned the wisdom of using the faculty’s income to finance infrastructural development. To them, it was the responsibility of the Government of Uganda to provide the university with sufficient buildings and other essential amenities. They argued that, after Government had failed to pay them a living wage, it did not seem reasonable for the faculty to go into income-generation ventures to supplement the Government’s pittance. These were powerful arguments indeed, but did not sway Grace Mukubwa to back off. Rather, he continued to convince his colleagues about the merits of a new building financed from their own income. After all, they could all see how crowded the place was. As if that was not enough, some members of staff started raising the issue of the faculty’s location. They felt that the faculty was at the periphery, too far removed from the centre of the university. If there were to be a new building, it would have to be built somewhere near the centre. From the discussions I held with a delegation which came to see me over the matter, they wanted the university to find their faculty a new site somewhere along Pool Road or better. Unfortunately, there was no vacant plot along Pool Road that the university could allocate to the Faculty of Law. I had to persuade them to make do with their present location. We had to convince them that being at the far southern end of the university main campus did not mean the Law School was being marginalised as some had implied in some of the discussions I had with them over the issue of space. The Law School was not the only faculty located there. With this explanation, they decided to rest their case for space in what they thought was the university’s prime area. When it was all said and done, the majority of staff was convinced that a new building was in their best interest. At the time, many of them were either sharing offices or had none at all. Even the Dean’s Office would pass for a rat hole. As we shall soon see, unfortunately, the new building came at a considerable cost to Professor Mukubwa and the former University Secretary, Avitus Tibarimbasa.

The original design was a complex of buildings with one of them serving as the Law Library. However, continued strong opposition and lack of sufficient funds to finance the rather ambitious project forced the faculty to revise the designs. The funds available, some Ugsh 300 million – the equivalent of some US$ 180,000 at the time – were just enough to finance a small three-floor building. Concorp, a Sudanese construction company operating in Uganda, won the tender to construct the building. Not long after the tender was awarded, the usual rumours started flying around that the Dean, in collusion with the University Secretary, was receiving kickbacks from the contractor. The allegations were so serious that some so-called concerned citizens asked the Inspector General of Government (IGG), to investigate. In fact, the IGG’s intervention saved the situation. After months of investigating the University Secretary, the IGG found no wrongdoing whatsoever. In awarding the tender, the University Council had followed the
procedures to the letter. Naturally, the outrageous allegations hurt us all and, for Professor Mukubwa, it was the last straw. Although he was eligible for re-election when his first term ended, he decided not to stand again. As for the University Secretary, allegations of this kind were not new. For him, they had become more or less occupational hazards. A friend of mine once told me that if I wanted a relatively trouble free tenure as Vice Chancellor, I should avoid going into things like construction. According to him, Ugandans had become so accustomed to believing that there was no tender without a ten percent commission or some kind of kickback. During Amin's time and thereafter, it was the accepted norm. I guess this was the perception Africans had of public officials and Government bureaucrats, which was an unpleasant fact of life we had to live with.

Fortunately for Dr Mukubwa and us in Administration, the contractor did a marvellous job. It was a pleasure to watch the new building slowly take shape and eventually the contractor handed over the keys to the university. The burnt red clay tegula-thatched building has, among the facilities, a book bank, a small lecture theatre with a seating capacity of 100 or so, staff offices and a large lecture hall with a seating capacity of about 300. With the inauguration of the new building, the faculty had largely solved the long nagging problem of teaching space for big classes. It was a personal triumph for Professor Mukubwa, who decided to stay on course, despite the never-ending criticisms from a few members of staff. Although the change of leadership meant shelving the library project, I was grateful to members of staff at the Faculty of Law for their far-sightedness and for accepting to forego their allowances for some time to pay for the 700 square metre building, I am sure they were equally proud of their achievement too. With the completion of this building in October 1998, I could see my dream of giving the University an architectural character slowly taking shape. With the exception of the Faculty of Social Sciences' new block, all buildings constructed during my time were roofed with burnt red clay tiles.

As I approached my last years as Vice Chancellor, the faculty elected Joe Oloka Onyango as Dean. When the news of his election reached me, I could not help thinking that in so doing, members of staff had paid a fitting tribute to one of the longest serving members of staff in the faculty and a loyal colleague. After his SJD from Harvard, Oloka Onyango could have stayed and worked in the USA or gone somewhere else where the pastures were greener than the Uganda of the 1980s. Instead, he chose to come back home, in the midst of Uganda's political and economic chaos, to build for the future of Uganda, East Africa, Africa and the world. I was almost certain that if Bernard Onyango had not retired from Makerere a few years earlier, the election of his son as Dean would have been a crowning moment for him too. Through his hard work, at the time he became Dean, Oloka Onyango had risen to the rank of Associate Professor. Becoming Dean meant relinquishing his position at HURIPEC. Young Sam Tindifa took
over as Acting Director of HURIPEC. Although a very much low-key person, under Onyango’s leadership, the faculty moved on. As we shall later discover, besides being a successful Dean, Joe was also a prominent founding member of the original Committee of 14, the C14, which planned for and implemented the – HYPERLINK “mailto:I@mak.com” \h – I@mak.com programme until he resigned from the Committee in 2003.

The attempt to defraud the faculty of almost eighty million shillings by one of the Faculty Accountants during his tenure as Dean was one of the few unfortunate incidents that come to mind. A young accountant in his office had forged his signature on a cheque and attempted to cash it. The bank intercepted the cheque and alerted the university authorities. When the results from the handwriting expert came back, the Police proved that the accountant had indeed forged Dean Oloka Onyango’s signature. The case went to court. Oloka’s occasional jibes at the Government and President Museveni in the press or at public functions did not always find favour for him with some sections of Uganda’s political establishment, but to him as an academic, the freedom to express one’s opinion without fear or favour was a God-given right.

I suppose it was as a result of the pervasive ICT revolution, when the faculty surprised the Academic Registrar by being one of the first to initiate a computerised system of processing examination results – from the raw marks to the final degree class – moreover using its own in-house developed software. To the faculty’s credit, the computer programme was flawless. Although the software had no problem, the first time it was used, in haste, the programmer missed some vital data which led to the computation of inaccurate GPAs and wrong degree classifications. For the final year students, the error was as embarrassing as it was painful. It was detected after the faculty had released the provisional results. The Academic Registrar had no choice but to recall the results to correct the mistake. After re-computing the GPA, grades and degree classes changed. For instance, many final year borderline students previously placed in the second-class lower division honours were later shocked to find themselves in the pass degree category; turning their joy into an explosion of understandable anger, bitterness and curses to the apparently incompetent university administrators. It was one of those agonising decisions we had to make from time to time. In such circumstances, we could only hold our breath, pray and hope that the consequences would not cause chaos within the students’ community.

When the Academic Registrar released the results again, this time with new GPAs and degree classes, we feared for the worst. I imagined hell breaking loose in Senate, when the students discovered that their grades had changed and their degree classes downgraded. We could only thank our lucky stars that most of the affected students understood the problem, accepted the outcome and the incident passed off relatively peacefully. That was a bitter lesson which prompted
us to speed up the setting up of a unified university-wide computerised system for processing examination results. Moreover, this unfortunate incident came when scores of past generations of students had been complaining that the Faculty of Law had earned for itself a reputation of being notoriously mean with marks. True or false, many apparently brilliant and hardworking students never graduated with the kind of honours degrees they expected. For as long as I could remember, Makerere Law students always excelled at the international moots, but none of them ever made first class honours. In fact, after Khidu Makubuya’s first class (the equivalent of summa cum laude in some countries) awarded in 1974, several years passed without a single student ever coming close to getting it. Khidu Makubuya’s record stood unbroken for over two decades. Yet, many graduates of the school who went on to postgraduate schools in some of the world’s top universities performed brilliantly and, indeed, many excelled. Some wondered whether the Law School at Makerere had not set that bar too high. One could only conjecture an answer! However, the semester system changed all that and students began to excel.

Like Professor Grace Tumwine Mukubwa, Oloka Onyango also decided not to seek a second term. Instead, he stepped down in order to concentrate his enormous intellectual energy on what he did best – writing and publishing. Soon, the labour of his pen earned him the well-deserved promotion to full Professor of Law, shortly after I had left the University. I was proud to see his wife, Silvia Tamale, also get her PhD from the University of Minnesota in the USA after her Master of Laws at Harvard. I think Silvia Tamale’s outspokenness on what some people consider taboo subjects speaks for itself. She was that kind person who firmly believed in her convictions and in the right of free speech. Speaking her mind in an unrestricted manner, as she often did, earned her the reputation of being one of the most controversial female academics at Makerere. You either liked her or hated her. To get a true insight of Silvia Tamale’s mind, one has to read her book When Hens Begin to Crow. Like her husband, she is also a resolute academic. By the time I left the University, she was poised to become an Associate Professor.

After Professor Oloka Onyango, Professor David Bakibinga took over the mantle as Dean. A commercial lawyer and a University of London PhD graduate, Professor Bakibinga came to the faculty after a stint as Board Secretary of the Uganda Revenue Authority. With an impressive record of good publications, he quickly rose to the rank of full Professor. Moreover, before his colleagues in the faculty had spotted his leadership potential, we asked him to act as Deputy Director of the School of Postgraduate Studies. When he left the School to take up his new position as Dean of Law in 2003, Professor Yustos Kaahwa, the physicist, replaced him. As we have seen earlier, Professor Bakibinga led the inquiry that unravelled the problems in the Institute of Psychology. He had as
Deputy Dean, Dr Lillian Tebatemwa Ekirikubinza, a University of Copenhagen PhD graduate, who in 2004 made history for herself and the women in general by becoming the first woman Deputy Vice Chancellor at Makerere. It was an interesting combination, but I did not stay long to see how the two got on with each other. The little that comes to mind about David Bakibinga’s time as Dean was the small students’ agitation about examinations retakes and related issues, which Mr Ngobi quickly resolved. I remember hearing some students alleging that the new Dean was hard on them. He was one of the candidates in the race for the post of Makerere’s ninth Vice Chancellor, but ended taking up the second Deputy Vice Chancellor position.

Promotions at Makerere were, for a long time, frustratingly slow. In part, the problem was the result of deprivation of funding and other critical resources members of staff needed to conduct meaningful research and produce publishable results in credible journals and at conferences. The daily struggle to find enough food to feed their families compounded the situation. At the same time, the university insisted that for one to be promoted from one rank to the next, one must have the requisite minimum publications in terms of quantity and quality. Over time however, the situation changed slightly for the better. More and more academic members of staff were meeting the criteria and being promoted. I had the privilege to witness many colleagues in the Faculty of Law beating the odds and getting their promotions. Grace Tumwine Mukubwa and David Bakibinga were the first generation of new full Professors after Abraham Kiapi and Joseph Nume Kakooza. I was equally happy to see Fred Jjuuko, the “Muwejjere” (common man) making it to Associate Professor and taking over the Head of the Department of Law and Jurisprudence. Jean Barya, the university lecturer with a PhD from Warwick in the UK and at the time Head of the Public and Comparative Law Department became Associate Professor too, shortly before I left. The number of younger and brilliant staff joining the faculty was equally good news. Many had taken their Masters of Law at the University of Cambridge in the UK and passed with ease. George William Mugwanya, with part of his fees paid from our Staff Development Fund, did Makerere proud when he passed his PhD at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana, USA summa cum laude, one of few students to have passed in that grade at the university.

Among the many other changes that took place in the Faculty of Law in my time was the re-assigning of staff to the three departments and HURIPEC according to their specialisations and interest. The opening up of the entry requirements, which enabled even Science students and Arts students who did not have Literature as one of their “A” Level subjects to enrol for Law, was in my opinion, another major milestone for the university. The criticism voiced after we had opened up was that students who had a Science background or those who did not have a Literature background had difficulty in writing in the articulate way lawyers are expected to write. Nonetheless, I believe that on equilibrium, it
was a good policy. Apparently, mastery of English Literature made it relatively easy for a Law student to write well. Naturally, without this background, Science students were handicapped but our conviction was that in time the good ones would master the writing skills.

Shortly before I took over as Vice Chancellor, Justice Benjamin Odoki headed a small Committee set up by the Government of Uganda in the early 1990s to look into the legal training at Makerere. At the time, no other University in Uganda offered Law. The Odoki Committee recommended several changes in the LLB degree curriculum, aimed at improving it to meet the new and emerging demands of the legal profession. For instance, in today’s world, lawyers are expected to be familiar with DNA finger-printing technology, Internet crime and so on. One of Justice Odoki’s major recommendations was to change the LLB degree from a three to a four-year course. We had the onus to implement this recommendation in the 1997/98 academic year. For example, Environmental Law became one of the LLB subjects. The revival of the Master of Law programme, combining course work and a short dissertation, was another landmark in the faculty during my tenure as Vice Chancellor. I was intrigued when Joe Oloka Onyango and a few of his colleagues talked to me about the possibility of introducing a Postgraduate Diploma course in Refugee Studies. Sooner than later, the faculty was offering the course.

When the time comes for the Faculty of Law to celebrate its golden jubilee and other anniversaries, it will look back to its humble beginnings as a department in the faculty of Social Sciences and becoming a full-fledged faculty in 1970 when Makerere was inaugurated as a national university, with a lot of pride and satisfaction of what it has built for the future of Uganda’s legal profession over the years. Scores of Makerere-trained lawyers are playing key roles in both the public and private sectors. Several of them are now judges of Uganda’s judicature and others are practising in several parts of the world. Tribute must go to the many members of staff, past and present, for their hard work and many who have already passed away, including Dr Kiwanuka (who died in New Zealand after his PhD), Abraham Kiapi, and Ben Obola Ochola, to mention but a few. Fortunately, at the time of writing this account some of the faculty’s founding members of staff were still alive and active. One recalls Justice (Professor) Joseph Nume Kakooza, Justice (Professor) George Kanyeihamba; Dr Joseph Byamugisha, John Katende, Fred Sempeebwa, a fellow Queen’s Belfast graduate – all now prominent lawyers in private practice in Kampala; Sam Njuba, another Queen’s Belfast graduate, now in national politics. Amanya Mushega, the former Secretary General of the East African Community also taught at the faculty briefly before he had to flee for his dear life. I recall my old friend, James Mayanja, who was a promising upcoming member of staff in the faculty before he left for Australia for his PhD. I was more than happy and privileged to see so many innovative changes take place in this faculty during my time at Makerere.
Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (IACE) – The Pleasure to Learn Knows No Age Limit

In December 1980, Uganda held her third general election. Three main political parties contested in the elections, namely the Uganda Peoples’ Congress (UPC); the Democratic Party (DP) and the new Uganda Patriotic Movement (UPM). Chango Machyo was one of the candidates who had decided to contest a parliamentary seat in Mbale on the UPM ticket. The story goes that the Tororo District Commissioner, who also doubled as the Returning Officer of the area, disqualified Chango Machyo as a candidate on the grounds that he failed to produce evidence to prove he could speak English. In 1953, Makerere College opened the Department of Extra Mural Studies, the new department set up upcountry outposts, including Mbale. What has all this got to do with Chango Machyo’s disqualification as an MP candidate in the 1980 election? It so happened that at the time of that infamous general election, Chango Machyo was a resident tutor of the Centre for Continuing Education in Mbale. He had studied in the UK and, while in London, he had been deeply involved in students’ politics and was a prominent student leader there for many years before returning to Uganda to take up an appointment atMakerere University College. On his return, he joined the staff of the Centre for Continuing Education (CCE) and was posted to Mbale as a resident tutor. Over the years, I have heard contradictory accounts why Chango Machyo was disqualified. However, the popular version at the time was that the Returning Officer disqualified Chango Machyo, because he failed to produce proof that he could speak English. Whatever the truth, the moral of the story was that the Returning Officer’s decision seemed to insinuate that Makerere was employing people who could not speak its language of instruction – English. Surely, if the aim was to scare an unwanted candidate, the Returning Officer could have done it in a less crude way. Those familiar with Chango’s satirical writing saw this absurd incident as a practical joke carried too far by the Returning Officer.

The Department of Extra Mural Studies was the first attempt to make Makerere College, which at the time was the only seat of higher learning in Eastern Africa, accessible to those who had missed the opportunity to study for a full-time course. When it started out in 1953, its broad responsibility was to provide the general public with various forms of university-based adult education. At the time, the Certificate in Adult Studies (or CAS as it was popularly known) was one of the few formal academic qualifications offered by the department. The CAS course continued well into the 1990s and beyond. After Uganda’s independence in 1962, which ushered a period of rapid Africanisation, the department experienced a growing demand for formal courses leading to qualifications that would open up employment opportunities for its graduates. In 1965, the Government of Uganda appointed the Kironde Committee to examine in depth the justification for upgrading the Department of Extra Mural Studies to a college. Following the
recommendations of the Kironde Committee, the department was transformed into a Centre for Continuing Education in 1966, with four units, namely Extra Mural Studies, Residential Course Unit, Correspondence Unit and the Mass Media Unit. In the 1970s, two more units were added – General and Professional Education Division and the Adult Educators Training Division. From these humble beginnings, it was and continues to be the principal organ of the university that specialises in promoting Adult Education and formal Life-long Learning programmes. When I joined Makerere as an undergraduate student in 1970, I wondered why the university had set up this department which appeared to have no students based at the main campus and yet occupied one of the largest buildings on the campus, almost next to the university’s main entrance. I saw it as a waste of time and valuable space; after all, anyone who missed the opportunity to join Makerere as a direct high school entrant could do so by taking the mature age examination to gain admission to a degree course. Ignorant as I was at the time, I had not yet quite understood the real value of adult and life-long learning, particularly when it led to no formal academic qualification we were so accustomed to. At the time, a Certificate or Diploma in Adult Studies made very little sense to me. What did people learn in Adult Studies? Were they being taught how to cope with old age and the ageing process? These were some of the ridiculous questions I asked myself as a naive first year undergraduate in 1970. Of course, later on I discovered and understood the purpose of this seemingly “studentless” department. I also came to appreciate the enormous value and importance of Adult Studies and life-long learning. Interestingly, that was also the time the construction of its current massive pre-fabricated building, financed with a Danish Agency for International Development (DANIDA) grant, had begun to be interrupted by Idi Amin’s coup of 1971. The Israeli civil engineering company, Soliel Boneh, which introduced the pre-fabricated concrete slab technology in Uganda and built the Bugolobi flats and the new Entebbe Airport among others and had won the tender to construct this huge building, was forced to leave the country at short notice before completing the work. Idi Amin’s Government contracted another company, which I could not trace, to complete the job. However, that company lacked the Soliel Boneh’s technical expertise and workmanship. The building’s flat roof proved a menace when it started leaking profusely a few years after the contractor had handed it over to the university. As with all other flat-roofed buildings in the University, the solution was to pitch the roof with GI sheets in order to prevent further damage from the leaking roof.

Years after its completion, this massive building complex was under-utilised. Apart from the southern wing overlooking the Makerere Institute of Social Research, where the Director’s office, staff offices, lecture rooms, studio and the library were located, the northern wing overlooking the University Guest House and tennis courts, was virtually empty. When the university came under extreme pressure in the late 1970s to provide accommodation for the growing number
of students, particularly the females, this side of the Centre for Continuing Education (CCE) building was given to the Dean of Students and turned into students’ hall of residence. The CCE Complex Hall now included the old Mitchell Hall buildings like Sejjongo and Nsubuga, among others. Uganda Commercial Bank (UCB) which was taken over by the then Standard Bank (now Standard Chartered Bank) Makerere University Branch, following Idi Amin’s directive, was an earlier tenant in the building. Originally, Makerere University Standard Bank branch used to be on the first floor of the Main Hall.

In the mid-1970s, after UCB had taken over the operations of Standard Bank, it moved from the Main Building, which had very limited space for expansion, into the more spacious offices in the new CCE building and remained there until 2002 when it moved again into the Senate House. Besides inadequacy of space and modern amenities, the CCE management badly needed the space the Bank occupied, in spite of the Bank being a source of income to the Centre. With the Bank gone, that source dried up but the space vacated by the Bank was now available for the institute’s use. The institute needed every available space for its expansion. By the time I returned to Makerere in 1993, the re-organisation of the institute into departments, which had begun in 1992, was still ongoing, but the lack of space was becoming a stumbling block to these efforts.

When CCE metamorphosed into the Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (IACE), the University Council approved only three academic departments, namely; Adult Education and Communication Studies (AECS); Community Education and Extra Mural Studies (CEEMS) and Distance Education (DE). When the assets of the now defunct CCE were shared among the three departments, the Department of Community Education and Extra Mural Studies took over the running of the regional centres based in Kampala, Jinja, Mbale, Lira, Gulu, Fort Portal, Kabale and Arua. When we came in, our first major task was to allocate the existing staff to the three departments. Under the old CCE, everyone was doing more or less the same thing, so disciplinary specialisation delineation was a very thin line. The new three departments were more specialised and as a result, the exercise took much longer than we had anticipated. Everyone was figuring out where they fitted best, according to their original specialisations. Staff had to choose the departments where their academic qualifications best fitted them. However, after distributing the existing staff into the three departments, it soon became clear that without additional staff, the new departments were grossly understaffed. It was a stark reminder to us that expansion and diversification of academic units came with a price tag. Eventually, we had to find a way of addressing the problem of inadequate staffing in the institute, across board.

In the many years I was at Makerere, Anthony Oketch’s name had become synonymous with the CCE. Apart from serving as a Director of the Centre,
he did much to promote and popularise adult education and adult studies countrywide and at Makerere, through his writings and outreach work. In fact, Anthony Oketch helped many mature age candidates pass the mature age entrance examination, using his booklets. For the many who attempted to gain admission to the university through the mature age scheme, the CCE provided an invaluable study material which could not be found anywhere else in the country, thanks to Anthony Oketch. When the CCE was re-organised into an institute, Anthony Oketch chose to join the Department of Adult Education and Communication Studies, together with Teresa Kakooza, another CCE icon. She too served as Director of the new institute for a number of years. Teresa Kakooza was an incredibly hardworking woman. A widow and a graduate of the University of Wales where she obtained a BSc, and Makerere where she got her MEd, and PhD in 1998, she always managed to combine her teaching and administrative responsibilities at the centre fending for her family single-handedly. I found that an amazing feat. Later, she would combine all this with her PhD research, which she embarked on at a fairly advanced age but still made a success of. I must say I learnt a thing or two from Dr Teresa Kakooza's exceptional honey-bee work habits; for instance, to scoff at able-bodied loafers who always indulged in self-pity. She also taught me the art of self-bootstrapping. I was extremely happy to see her daughter, Angela, who I had the privilege to teach briefly during my moonlighting days, graduate as a doctor from the Medical School. Besides Teresa Kakooza and Anthony Oketch, Nuwa Sentongo was another icon and a good colleague with whom I had an equally long association. Although I had known him in the early 1970s as a good playwright an actor in the Kampala City Players, I got to know him better when he was elected Deputy Director and later Director of the Institute after Dr Tereza Kakooza.

My association with Nuwa Sentongo began in 1973, the year I graduated from Makerere. In November of that year, I met and fell in love with a young beautiful girl by name Alice. I desperately wanted to impress my new girlfriend and future wife with the sophisticated and affluent tastes of a young Makerere graduate. At the time, discotheques were unheard of in Kampala. We danced to live band music and there were plenty of bands around. As you might have guessed, at the time, most of the bands in Kampala simply regurgitated Congolese music, singing the Lingala lyrics verbatim, whose meaning they cared less to know. The word copyright meant nothing to the bad managers who were just too eager to cash in on the popularity of the Congolese music. A few bands however composed and sang their original music, but the beat and rhythm were typically Congolese. In the 1960s and '70s, Congolese music had taken East Africa by the storm, we loved and adored it. The sukusu, rumba, moonwalk (so called because the dance mimicked how the two American astronauts, Neil Armstrong and Buz Aldrin, walked on the moon in 1969), you name it, we danced it all. While the Americans and Europeans had their Elvis Presley, the Beatles, the Mick Jagger
and the Rolling Stones, Cliff Richard and others, we had our Franco and the TP OK Jazz Band, Tabuley, Dr Nico, Bokelo and many more. The extra-agile Suziman of the Raphael Kawumba’s band at Mengo was our star dancer and master choreographer. The local bands copied and reproduced every latest hit churned out by the Nairobi-based ASL label to the last notation.

Although I was not a regular theatre goer, Alice hinted she enjoyed going to theatre. At the time, the National Theatre was the place to watch an interesting play and Nuwa Sentongo was a young actor whose group staged good plays there. I decided to pay for tickets for two and that evening Nuwa Sentongo and his group were on stage. We enjoyed every moment of their acting but, more importantly, Nuwa’s good acting sealed the deal for me, because when I finally popped the question, Alice did not hesitate to say “yes”. I guess she was convinced of my sophisticated theatrical tastes. That was also the beginning of my newfound love for the theatre. That was the time of late Byron Kawadwa, Jack Sekajugo, Eclas Kawalya and a group of dedicated English theatrical enthusiasts. I guess I owe it, at least in part, to Nuwa Sentongo’s good acting antics. He made my day. Whenever we had a moment to share a joke, I used to remind him of his vital contribution to my courtship when I needed it most.

In late 1991, two years before I left ITEK, the Institute of Adult and Continuing Education made a proposal to the University Senate to offer two external degree programmes; the Bachelor of Education or BEd (External) and Bachelor of Commerce or BCom (External). This was the first time, since its founding as a Department of Extra Mural Studies in 1953, the institute would offer degrees. Unfortunately, there was a problem the institute had to sort out before Senate could recommend approval of the proposed degrees. It had neither the staff of its own to teach on the degree programmes nor the mandate to offer the two degrees. The mandates lay with the School of Education and the Faculty of Commerce respectively. In any case, ITEK was already offering the BEd degree on behalf of Makerere University, so why duplicate efforts? But as the discussions progressed, it became evident that what IACE was proposing was not necessarily a duplication of the BEd degree offered at ITEK; it was meant to be a distance education version of it. Since the proposed degree had a lot in common with the ITEK programme, we had to participate in the discussions and drafting of the curriculum, using the ITEK BEd as a model.

Mr Gashom Eyoku, the then Senior Deputy Registrar at Makerere, was responsible for coordinating the curriculum development for the new degree on behalf of the University Senate. I received an invitation from him requesting me, as Principal of ITEK, and a few of my colleagues to participate in some of the discussions. The debates were lively and constructive and, before long, a draft curriculum was ready to go to Senate. As a solution to the two sticky points of staff and mandates, it was agreed that IACE would be responsible for the administration
of the programmes only. For the purposes of teaching and examinations, the IACE students would have to register with the School of Education and Faculty of Commerce, both of which would also provide the teaching staff. At the time, the solution looked workable and after receiving Senate and Council approval, the two degree programmes were launched in the academic year 1991/92. However, much as this arrangement was perceived as a good compromise, it deprived the IACE of direct academic control over the programme. In a sense, the BEd and BCom external students belonged to the teaching Faculties, an arrangement which reduced the role of IACE in the programme to that of a mere clearing house. As we shall see later, the arrangement proved problematic, particularly with regard to the BCom programme, which led to unnecessary misunderstanding between IACE and the Business School. That was one of the problems I left unsolved in 2004.

According to the new IACE departmental mandates, the Department of Distance Education was responsible for the management of the two external degree programmes. At the time, Mrs Julian Bbuye, another colleague of mine at Kampala High school during our moonlighting days, was the acting Head of that department. Undoubtedly, the coordination and management of the two degree programmes was a heavy responsibility on a young department with just a skeleton staff. To make the situation even more difficult for the department, the public response when the university advertised the two courses was overwhelming. The programmes popularity stemmed from the fact that the new degrees had opened avenues for many students who had missed joining the university as direct school entrants or under the mature age entrance scheme. It was also an opportunity for the non-graduate teachers and accountants already in employment and who therefore could not afford to attend the university as full-time students to study and earn a professional degree. The way things were going, it was beginning to look as if the institute was falling victim to its own success. No doubt, the IACE had stumbled on a long-awaited innovation. Since the two degree programmes had been designed to be fully self-financing, with no Government input, the number of students required to attain the critical mass for the programmes to be self-sufficient had to be reasonably high. Naturally, that meant big enrolments as the programmes matured. In the 1991/92 academic year when both programmes were launched, only 245 students registered. By 2003/2004, within a time frame of slightly over ten years, the number in the three distance education programmes had exponentially increased to about 6,500 in total.

Besides attending to large numbers of students and acting as the institute’s liaison with the School of Education and Faculty of Commerce, one of the major challenges Mrs Bbuye’s department faced was course material development. In 1991/92, there was no other institution in Uganda offering a degree programme delivered through the distance education mode, so the institute had to start from scratch. At the beginning, the Vancouver-based Commonwealth of Learning
and the University of Nairobi proved useful sources of some of the teaching and learning materials. Even then, the material from Canada and Nairobi had to be edited and adapted to Makerere’s situation. Since the department did not have sufficient in-house capacity to develop and write all the course material, it had to scout around for expertise. To complicate an already difficult situation further, the department had only one senior and experienced member of staff, Nuwa Sentongo, who was also doubling as the Institute Director, which left him with very little time to devote to his department. With amazing zeal, imagination and hard work, the shaky and uncertain start gave way to progress. Slowly, things started falling into shape. The department recruited an editor, S. N. Siminyu, to help with the enormous task of editing and putting together the course materials the experts were writing. The success of this young department gave comfort; in that the university had high quality staff we had reason to be proud of.

As the course material, as well as students’ files started to accumulate, the department was in desperate need of additional space. The Vice Chancellor was approached by Mrs Bbuye and her colleagues to present this request. I had made it a practice that every time I was presented with a request for space, I turned to the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Professor Epelu Opio, for a solution or advice. However, even before “off-loading” the problem to him, I always knew the kind of answer he would give. He would say, “Mukulu, (Luganda word for ‘elder’), where can I find the space you are asking for?” The unpleasant truth was that, without additional buildings, the university was stuck with a chronic space shortage problem. I happened to overhear Mrs Bbuye say that the accommodation the department was asking for from the University Administration would be temporary, because they were saving some money to construct a building of their own. It was a good idea, but still it was not an answer to the burning problem at hand. Their problem demanded an immediate solution so we had to look elsewhere for it. Surprisingly, the solution came in the most unexpected way. Below the new CCE building was an old tin-roofed building which was part of the old Mitchell Hall complex, dating back to the early years of the college, called the Nsubuga Block. As the college grew and acquired more land on top of the Makerere Hill, the students moved to the new Mitchell Hall and the buildings of the old Mitchell Hall were more or less abandoned until students started occupying the old complex again in the late 1970s. With the policy that pegged admission on residence now abandoned, we thought it was time to get the students out and turn it into an academic facility.

When the Space Allocation Committee agreed to allocate the old building to the Department of Distance Education, it was in bad shape and therefore required a good dose of renovation. Fortunately, despite its seventy years or more, it was still in good structural condition. The rooms were tiny, which made me wonder how students fitted in them, but the Nsubuga Block gave the department the
much-needed respite. Although the external degree students studied on their own for most of the time, at the end of each semester, they were required to attend a compulsory two-week face-to-face session, the only time they would meet with their lecturers and officially be in residence at the university. I always had this nagging thought that something could go terribly wrong when the students were in residence, because of the large number. But to my relief every year, they always managed to go through the exercise smoothly. Indeed, it was always the busiest time for the department and for the lecturers, as a lot of material had to be crammed into a space of two weeks and a lot of students attended to. I was to learn later that, in addition to the official two weeks, some students living in and around Kampala organised themselves into groups and solicited the services of lecturers for a fee to give them more of the informal face-to-face sessions. Since that was a purely private arrangement, there was no way we could stop them. Besides, the external degree courses being a year longer than their full equivalents, the students covered exactly the same material and sat the same examinations as the regular students. The external Bachelor of Commerce degree, which at the time had more appeal than the Bachelor of Education, was four years whereas the regular BCom and the external BEd were a three-year programme. Its regular equivalent at ITEK was a two-year programme. Since the students were qualified and some were practising teachers, for both the regular and external BEd, the practical attachment was not a requirement.

One of the most prominent external BEd students in my time was Uganda’s First Lady, Janet Museveni. For her security concerns, we decided that during the examination period, she would write her papers in the Chancellor’s office under the strict supervision of two or more lecturers from Makerere and ITEK as invigilators. That was the only time we did not allow her body guards in the same room she was. Fortunately, her body guards complied with the university’s instructions. Like all the other students, she had to undergo the compulsory examination search too. At this time, she was no First Lady, but just another university student. I recall some students asking where Mrs Janet Museveni was writing her examinations, because they never saw her in the Main Hall auditorium. We had actually thought of allowing her to sit with the rest of the students in the Main Hall, but the security concerns compelled us to think of a more secure venue for her. Although she was a student, we were not oblivious to the fact that she was, indeed, the First Lady. That aside, there were two major drawbacks with the two external degree programmes. Besides being just coordinators of the programmes with no direct say in their academic management, the institute was also incurring quite heavy overhead costs. Most of the institute’s money went into paying teaching and examination allowances, leaving the institute with very little money to plough back into facility improvement. Also getting some lecturers to submit marks, particularly for the BCom students, was a real tussle which sometimes degenerated into a war of words between the IACE and the Business
School at Nakawa. Shortly before I left the university, some Business School lecturers had started holding IACE to ransom, withholding students’ marks until the institute paid them. We were soon approaching a point of “enough is enough”. A radical new arrangement was the solution we thought would put an end to the squabbling and poor cooperation between the institute and Makerere University Business School (MUBS). We reasoned that the Institute of Economics was the best alternative to assume the role of the Business School. It would co-run the BCom external with the IACE. I left before we had implemented the new arrangements.

Over and above the BEd and BCom, the institute – working in collaboration with the Faculty of Science and with financial assistance provided by the Carnegie Corporation of New York – added the BSc to the list of external degree programmes. Some were sceptical about the feasibility of IACE being able to offer an external degree in the highly practical Science disciplines such as Biology, Chemistry and Physics. Again, the answer was as ingenious as it was simple. When the regular students are on vacation between semesters, the external BSc students would be in the laboratories in the Faculty of Science for their practical work. In fact, one member of staff in the Department of Chemistry who participated in the trial phase of the programme was amazed at the amount of experiments the students could cover in just two weeks. His observation was that the regular BSc programmes were using time inefficiently. In effect, this meant that in addition to the face-to-face sessions offered at the upcountry centres and in designated schools and colleges, the external BSc students would have two residential sessions at the university per semester, both devoted to field and laboratory work. The experiment was a success, perhaps a befitting farewell to Nuwa Sentongo, who was about to step down after serving as Director of the institute for four good years. By the time the four-year BSc was launched in the 2001/2002 session as the third external degree in the institute, Julian Bbuye had stepped down as Head of Department to concentrate on her PhD thesis research. Mrs Florence Olal Odur took over the mantle of running the busy department. In a way, the women were making a point to be just as good administrators as men, if not better, and were capable of competently running even the seemingly difficult departments with success. Florence was almost deputy to Julian Bbuye. Therefore, she had no difficulty stepping in Julian's footsteps. In addition to the three degree programmes, the department was running the Commonwealth Diploma in Youth in Development (CYP) in collaboration with the Open University of Tanzania and the Commonwealth Youth Secretariat based in Lusaka, Zambia for which I had the honour to sign the Memorandum of Understanding on behalf of Makerere University, as well as short courses in Project Planning and Management, Writing and Publishing, Business Planning and Research Assistantship Skills. By the time we left the university, the latter three had not yet come on stream. However, even with the BSc external degree programme up and running, the institute still did
not have a degree programme it could truly call its own. As we have seen, in the three external degree programmes, the IACE only played a coordination role. As if my colleagues in IACE were trying to live up to the joke I used to make every so often when the occasion arose, that “as members of the academic staff, we were employed primarily to think”, and indeed the institute had started thinking big! For the first time in its existence, it would have a full-time degree programme of its own, run entirely in the institute, with little or no external assistance.

As often is the case, when new ideas are first introduced, they sound strange. People are usually conservative and stuck in their old ways. Therefore, I could not blame anyone for dismissing the Bachelor of Adult and Community Education (BACE) degree programme outright. It was a classic case of thinking outside of the box. The question was, what was it all about and what would the graduates be doing with this degree? It was a legitimate question to have asked at the time Nuwa Sentongo and his colleagues first floated the idea. Fortunately, we did not have to wait for long before we got the answer to our question. In 1999, Nuwa Sentongo and his colleagues in the Department of Adult Education and Communication Studies decided to launch the BACE degree programme. Naturally, both Senate and the University Council raised questions as to what exactly the objectives of this unconventional degree were. Fortunately, the institute had done its homework well and had no difficulty getting the degree programme approved. According to both Senate and the University Council, the proposed degree – strange as it might have sounded to some – made sense. With the introduction of the BACE degree, the IACE had propelled itself into a true status of a faculty. This meant that the IACE could now register students on a degree programme of its own.

The argument in favour of the new degree programme was that, over time, the discipline of Adult Studies had grown beyond the certificate and diploma level, which was natural in the development of any discipline.

The main objective of the BACE degree was to create a cadre of well-trained decision makers, designers and implementers of programmes in Adult and Community Education. This would be done by equipping them with sound knowledge, skills and attitudes in community and contemporary socio-economic issues related to the development process and adult education in general. It was in a way intended to produce graduates capable of accelerating community development and development in the country in general. The curriculum addressed three main themes: Development Studies; Adult Education; and Community Development. It was also intended to have a fair balance between classroom lectures and hands-on practical fieldwork, as well emphasis on developing the students’ communication, which is a critical skill required of a community worker. Admission was open to the direct entrants, as well as those who sat and passed the mature students’ examination and diploma holders. However, when the institute launched the programme, we were not sure enough students would enrol to make the programme self-sustaining and viable.
To everyone’s surprise, at the end of the selection and admission exercise, the institute had more than the minimum number required to form a critical mass. That was another crowning moment for the institute that had been the vanguard of Adult Education in the country for almost half a century. I was happy to witness the launch of this milestone and to participate in some of the students’ activities whenever they invited me. As I discovered, Captain Abbey Mukwaya, the husband of Minister Janet Mukwaya was among the programme’s pioneer students. Earlier, his wife had joined the university in the late 1980s to study for a degree in Political Science and she had long completed, graduating with a good BA degree. Besides the BACE degree and its traditional programmes in Adult Education, at about the same time the Department of Adult Education and Communication Studies also introduced another certificate course in Effective Communication for the Uganda Certificate of Education holders. In addition, the institute ran a number of new short and part time non-degree programmes to cater for those who wanted to acquire education and skills in such areas ICT, as well as trainers in Adult Education. In fact, many university and non-university students took advantage of the institute’s Computer Science course to acquire and improve their computer skills. In a span of less than ten years, the institute had become a hive of academic activities.

Besides the exciting and innovative programmes, it was gratifying for us to see members of staff beginning to register for the PhD. For a long time, Dr Anne Katahoire, Head of the Department of Community Education and Extra Mural Studies was the only PhD holder in the institute. Dr Tereza Kakooza and Dr Daniel Babikwa, who had studied for his PhD at Rhodes University in South Africa, were the next additions. Dr Denis Atwaru Okello also joined the rank of PhD holders in the institute when he obtained his PhD from Makerere in 2003. Shortly after graduation, he replaced Nuwas Sentongo as Director of the institute. For Jessica Aguti, getting out of the management of the African Virtual University (AVU) was in a way a blessing in disguise because she was sponsored by the Staff Development Fund to study for her PhD at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa. Equally significant was the acquisition of new vehicles, purchased with funds from the institute’s internally-generated revenue. I had the privilege to commission one of the new vehicles shortly before I retired. As the fleet of vehicles grew, my office ended up losing one of our good and long-serving drivers, David Sekandi, to the institute as it offered better incentives than the Vice Chancellor’s office. David Sekandi was not the only staff I lost to the IACE. Earlier, I had lost Henry Mayega, one of the young Assistants in the Vice Chancellor’s office, who was also doubling as the university’s Public Relations Officer before the appointment of Ms Helen Kawesa.

Henry Mayega took over the vacant position of Institute Assistant Registrar. In the great achievements of the Institute of Adult and Continuing Education I have just described, we had a lot to be grateful for. I was deeply grateful to all
the colleagues there, who worked so hard to make it happen in my time, from a Certificate in Adult Studies (CAS) in 1953 to four degree programmes, including the unique Bachelor of Adult and Community Education Degree (BACE).

**African Virtual University (AVU) – The Promise of the University of the Future**

Convinced that the quality of higher education in most sub-Saharan Africa was declining, and due in part to its policies in the late 1980s, which starved African universities of funding, in 1995 the World Bank mooted the idea of setting up and funding a satellite-based distance learning university for Africa, which became the African Virtual University (AVU). It was initially hosted within the Bank’s headquarters in Washington DC. At the time, the World Bank bureaucrats believed that the AVU, with programmes sourced from institutions in Europe, Australia and North America and beamed to Africa via satellite, was the answer to the declining quality of university education in Africa. However, for the AVU to work as a legitimate African institution, the World Bank needed the support of partner institutions in Africa. Makerere University was one of the six African universities that former Burundi-born Director of the AVU at the World Bank, Dr Etienne Baranshamaje, identified as one of the possible African partner institutions that he desired to see participate in the AVU pilot phase. However, when he first visited Makerere in 1995, the AVU was still just an idea. I must confess that when he met me for the first time to introduce the idea and to ask whether Makerere University would be interested in participating in the pilot phase of the project, it took me a while to internalise what the whole concept was about. I kept wondering whether it was not another case of all hats, no cattle. Since when had the World Bank become an advocate of quality higher education in Africa? I could vividly remember the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) our Government had been implementing a few years earlier, which had starved the university of sufficient funding and how the same World Bank had convinced African Governments not to invest heavily in higher education because it was perceived to have a much lower social return on investment than basic education. It all came back in a flash of a second as I listened to Dr Barnshamaje. I wondered whether this was the same famous Britton Woods financial institution now making a u-turn and why? At that time many universities in Africa, including Makerere, were grappling with the disastrous consequences of those policies and licking the wounds inflicted on them by the SAPs.

Those hard days were still fresh in our minds. Granted that the biblical Saul could become Paul; but in an impoverished continent so riddled with hunger, disease and a myriad of other problems related to under-development, was this the best approach to quality higher education in Africa? However, like a good salesman, Etienne was convinced that it was the best for Africa. Having once
been a reasonably good academic, which I want to believe I was at some point in the remote past and one who never wanted to let an innovative idea pass by without grabbing it, I decided to concede to his “hi-tech” talk, which at the time seemed to be a little over-hyped, a try. His convincing arguments had sufficiently aroused my curiosity and interest in the concept. The more I listened to him, the more I wanted to know about what seemed to be a totally new approach to the way we could deliver higher education in our part of the world in the future. It seemed to me that if the experiment succeeded, the AVU could well be the university of the Future for the continent. To Etienne’s delight, we agreed that Makerere University would participate in the project. To my reasoning, we had nothing to lose by participating.

Since the AVU had a lot to do with some form of distance learning, I advised Etienne that the IACE was the most appropriate academic unit best suited to discuss the practical details of the university’s ability and readiness to participate in the latest innovation for Africa from the World Bank. I therefore handed over all the AVU business to Nuwa Sentongo and his colleagues at the IACE. After visiting the premises, Etienne complained about the IACE ICT facilities being sub-standard for an institute. He wanted the AVU to be hosted in the Institute of Computer Science (ICS). Then, the ICS was no more than a little building in the far corner of the Department of Mathematics building. Secondly, only the IACE had the mandate to offer distance education programmes at Makerere. Much as the premises were found wanting, it was the appropriate place for the future AVU at Makerere. After convincing Etienne to accept our decision, the issue was how to fit the AVU within the academic and administrative structures of the university. Was it supposed to be a university within a university or an integral part of Makerere University? From 1997 when the pilot phase was inaugurated until about 2000 or 2001 when it entered into the second phase and the whole AVU concept changed, the issue of the relationships between the two institutions remained unresolved. On the other hand, we thought that, for once, we could swallow a bit of our pride and let our students have access to professors of international repute. That was not to say that Makerere did not have such professors in its rank and file. It was a question of students gaining the experience in the new interactive media technology, which I thought was fascinating. In accepting to participate in the pilot phase, our understanding was that the AVU would complement our own academic programmes. To get the project off the ground, Etienne asked us to identify a capable member of staff who would coordinate the project at Makerere. We had no difficulty finding Ms Jessica Aguti of the Department of Distance Education. She was a young member of staff who had shown a lot of promise. We charged her with the heavy responsibility of coordinating the first phase of the project, which began and ended in 1999, and the second phase which ended in 2002.
As Etienne convinced more institutions in the country to sign on, the Makerere AVU centre became its regional headquarters with other centres at Uganda Martyrs’ University at Nkozi and at Uganda Polytechnic at Kyambogo, among others. As we started planning for the implementation of the project, Etienne kept bringing in engineers from USA who he said had come to check how they would install the equipment in the studios located in the basement of the IACE building. Sometimes, I got confused as to who was really supposed to do the job. I guess they were coming to see the site and what they were expected to do before they submitted their tender bids to the Bank, which was the normal World Bank practice. Some of the experts Etienne came along with were retired NASA engineers, who had set up private companies. As part of our obligation to the AVU project, we identified a brilliant young Ugandan electrical engineer, Alex Twinomugisha who had recently graduated from our Faculty of Technology, to act as our technical expert on the project and also work with Etienne’s engineers during the installation and testing phase. The young man excelled far beyond everyone’s expectation and ended up taking up a much bigger appointment with the AVU International at the World Bank. However, as we shall soon see, the basement in this wing of the IACE building where the equipment was being installed presented us with a huge technical challenge which had dogged the engineers long before we thought of converting the studios there into an AVU facility.

After some delays, the big satellite dish was finally installed within the IACE inner quadrangle. With the huge dish in place and the necessary equipment to receive the telecasts installed, by June 1997, it was time to test the equipment and receive the first signal and then launch the Virtual University. Jessica Aguti was doing her job well and Etienne was showering her with lots of praises. Although the first official transmission was a low key affair with almost no paraphernalia, the AVU launch ceremony was an occasion to celebrate. But the real big launch which had to wait a little longer, was held at the University of Addis Ababa in Ethiopia. Due to other pressing engagement I had at the time, I was not able to travel to Addis Ababa, but Makerere was well represented. Coming after several months of hard work, scepticism and setbacks, the launch of the AVU was in itself a technical triumph for Etienne. As I sat in the AVU studio in the basement of the IACE building, waiting for the maiden live telecast to be beamed on the TV screens, Etienne’s image suddenly appeared. As if they were there to ensure a glitch-free telecast, several technicians could be seen working behind him as he sat in the AVU studios in the World Bank headquarters in Washington DC, waiting to deliver his maiden address to all AVU centres he had set up in the various parts of Africa. At the end of his brief speech, we put a few questions to him as a way of testing whether it worked as a truly interactive system. The telecast was flawless.
After the AVU was officially launched in June 1997, we selected a group of students from the Department of Electrical Engineering and a few of their Lecturers to attend the first lectures beamed from Dublin in Ireland, USA and Canada. Later, lectures were being offered in Advanced Mathematics – mainly General Calculus and Differential Equations, Physics, Computer Science, General Engineering, Internet and even Organic Chemistry. Some of the courses were replicas of what was being taught at Makerere, others covered up to 60 per cent of our syllabi; a few were totally new with no equivalents at Makerere. It was a pleasant surprise for me to learn that there was a serious academic discipline called Internet. Initially, about 30 students were selected to attend the AVU courses, but later, depending on the timetabling, more students signed on. It was a fascinating experience and experiment for both staff and students, although a few had earlier expressed misgivings about the whole thing, branding it “back-door recolonisation of Africa”. The interesting part was that the students could see and interact with the professors teaching them live on a television screen in real time. They could ask questions and the professors would answer them immediately as if they were physically with them in the classroom. Interestingly, Makerere students were attending the lectures simultaneously with students at other AVU centres in Africa. The system worked more or less like video conferencing. In addition to the live telecasts, the system had a built-in provision for recording the lectures for future use. As I watched the AVU take shape, I began to visualise the significance of this innovative mode of delivering education. It occurred to me that this mode of teaching could replace the traditional lecture room and the endless quest for space on our overcrowded campuses. Students could be taught from anywhere, as long as they had access to a place with the requisite equipment to receive the signal. As African universities started to grapple with the growing problem of massification, which translated into the never-ending demand for more professors and buildings to cope with the large student enrollments, I could see the important role this innovation was poised to play in the near future in the delivery of quality to what was increasingly becoming massified higher education in Africa. To me, the AVU experience was much more than virtual reality. It was the like the real thing. All we had to do was to figure out how to make the technology affordable and sustainable, with much of the content and teaching coming from Africa, instead of Europe and North America.

Besides the degree programmes in Electrical Engineering, Computer Science and Physics, the AVU was supposed to offer short-term courses for business executives at a fee. Although Etienne expected us to advertise these short courses, which were being transmitted from time to time as widely as we could, he was still concerned about the state of the IACE building and the AVU studios in the basement. According to him, the whole place fell short of the kind of standards top business executives would expect. As I pointed out earlier, this was a building which had fallen victim to Idi Amin's erratic policies before it was fully completed.
Naturally, it was in a bad but tolerable shape. To him, it was not tolerable at all, but he had no choice. Admittedly, this was a big minus for a hi-tech and innovative institution like the AVU and I agreed with him. I had personally seen the state of the studio and the building at first hand. Since its completion in the 1970s, the IACE building had never had a major facelift to bring it to a standard befitting a project like the AVU. Unfortunately, that was all we had. We could only promise that things would only get better and not worse anymore. At the time we were giving those assurances, it was just blind faith. However, in 2000 when NORAD gave the university a grant to construct a four-floor building for the Institute of Computer Science, the University Council had agreed to find extra money to add a fifth floor to the building. Then I had made a promise to Dr Baranshamaje that as soon as the new Computer Science building was completed, the AVU would move there. As it turned out later and for reasons beyond my control, my promise never materialised.

Luckily, at about the same time, the AVU also changed its philosophy and mode of operation. Dr Etienne Baranshamaje resigned from the World Bank and the AVU soon after the pilot phase. The AVU later became an independent entity, going by the new name AVU International, and moved out of the World Bank headquarters. Shortly after that, the university’s headquarters moved to Lavington, Nairobi in 2000 with Dr Peter Materu, an electrical engineer, formerly with the University of Dar es Salaam taking over from Etienne as Director. Before Etienne left the World Bank, he had come up with a new concept. He wanted the AVU centres to operate as business entities, managed by business managers. Since the original concept had changed, Etienne reached the conclusion that Jessica Aguti didn’t quite fit the profile of a business manager. She was an academic and not a business person, and therefore had to make way for a real business manager. Tito Okumu, a mathematician by training was that kind of person they were looking for. In 2001, he was appointed the business manager of AVU Makerere Centre. In my opinion, the AVU underwent too many rapid changes in too short a time, which left us confused and almost at the point of derailing the proper development of this novel institution.

My recollection at the time was that when Etienne first floated the idea of a virtual university for Africa, Electrical Engineering, Computer Engineering and Computer Science had been identified as the degree programmes the AVU would begin with soon after the pilot phase. To that end, I had been asked to identify academic staff who would work with a Nigerian lady, the World Bank’s AVU curriculum development specialist, to write the curricula for the three disciplines. I remember Engineer Kaluuba, who was then Head of the Department of Electrical Engineering, Professor Yusto Kaahwa of the Physics Department and one or two other members of staff, spending time in Washington DC as part of a team that developed and wrote the original AVU curriculum for the various disciplines the AVU had planned to offer as full-fledged degrees. I also recall Alex Twino telling
me when the curricula came out, the proposed AVU Electrical Engineering Degree curriculum was a lot more modern and richer in content than the Makerere BSc Electrical Engineering. Although the curriculum made room for physical laboratory work, the AVU students had to do most of their experiments by simulation – like the airline pilots and astronauts do most of their training. Later, I learnt that in countries like Burundi, where the AVU centres had been founded outside the universities and ran as private initiatives, the proprietors had recruited and registered students for the original degrees the AVU had proposed to offer. They were waiting for the telecasts to begin. Unfortunately for them, when the Vice Chancellors of the AVU hosting universities met the new Director of AVU International, Professor Cheick Modibo Diarra, a Malian who had replaced Dr Peter Materu, for the first time at the Nairobi Intercontinental Hotel in 2002, they were surprised to be told that the original degree programme in Electrical Engineering and others had been scrapped or shelved. Instead, the AVU was going to concentrate on Computer Science and Business Studies, moreover at lower levels. The degree in Computer Science would be offered in partnership with some competitively selected institutions in Australia and elsewhere. This was a big setback for our colleagues from Burundi whom I guess had to refund fees to the disappointed students. The AVU International went ahead to hire a team of consultants, who went around assessing each site’s readiness to host the Computer Science degree programme. The Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) in Australia had been selected to offer the degree course in Computer Science on behalf of the AVU International. It was now a completely new arrangement. At the same time, more centres had come on stream, including one in Pretoria which kept Alex Twinomugisha busy and constantly on the move, as he was part of a team of engineers responsible for installing equipment at most of the new sites.

I must confess that I was disappointed with the constant shifting of positions by AVU and as a result, my interest began to wane. I started growing cold feet about what I had seen as a revolutionary way of delivering quality higher education to many African students who were in desperate need of it. For reasons I never figured out, AVU International decided to abandon the Kenyatta University site in Nairobi, which Dr Etienne Baranshamaje had all along been hailing as a showcase for a well-managed AVU Centre, rather unceremoniously. In fact, I had visited the Kenyatta University a few years before and I had been impressed by what I had seen at their AVU Centre. Without a doubt, what I saw then had left me with a positive impression. I left with the feeling that Kenyatta, which had joined the AVU about a year later than Makerere, had actually done better than us. Unlike Makerere which had allocated just the studios and a room for the computer laboratory, the Vice Chancellor of Kenyatta University, Professor George Eshiwan, allocated the entire equivalent of Makerere’s Institute of Adult and Continuing Education to the AVU. As the Centre began to lose appeal, its
hardworking coordinator, Dr Magdalene Juma, resigned from Kenyatta University and joined the AVU International at its new headquarters in Lavington, as a full-time member of staff. My disappointment with the AVU International was partly because Nuwa Sentongo, Julian Bbuye, Florence Olal Odur and Jessica Aguti had worked so hard to convince Senate and later Council to approve the AVU as part of the IACE, and this had sailed through without difficulty.

Now with all these changes, we were no longer sure how and which way to proceed. It was beginning to look like we were back to square one. I was therefore not surprised when I received news from Nairobi that Makerere was not among the African universities the consultants had selected to participate in the AVU-RMIT Computer Science course. Among the reasons the consultants cited for eliminating Makerere from the list of participating universities was lack of cooperation from the Director of the Institute of Computer Science, Dr Venasius Baryamureeba. Apparently, Dr Baryamureeba had not seen much logic in going into partnership with the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology when ICS had already developed its own BSc degree programme in Computer Science. When our bid to participate in the RMIT Computer Science degree programme failed, AVU at Makerere was left with only short courses to run. However, much as they were not the full-fledged degree programmes, some of these short Computer Science courses proved popular with students and the public.

Just as we thought that Makerere was no longer an important AVU Centre, Nairobi sent a reminder that we had to remit a percentage of the fees to AVU International in addition to paying the Business Manager’s salary and a multitude of other overheads. By the time I retired, I was on the verge of proposing that Makerere should pull out of the AVU. For Makerere, the AVU experience was a case of a brilliant idea gone sour. However, the university derived other benefits from the presence of the AVU. The digital library, which I alluded to earlier, and a computer laboratory in IACE were some of the spin-offs. Another benefit that comes to mind was the plugging of the leaking floor in the studio at the basement, several engineers had failed to pinpoint the source of the water that was constantly flooding the studio floor, to the extent that they recommended digging up part of the foundation to find the fault. Somehow, when the AVU took over the studios, a solution was finally found. My guess, which was pure conjecture, was that at a particular spot in the studio the water table, which also serves as the source of River Nakivubo, was sometimes fairly close to the surface of the studio, and this was the cause of the flooding.

**Makerere University Institute of Social Research – Research: Her Prime Mandate**

The Makerere Institute of Social Research (MISR) established in 1948 as the Makerere College that was preparing to enter into a special relationship with
the University of London, was one of Makerere’s centres of excellence before the
dark curtain fell on the university. At the time, the institute’s focus was mainly
on anthropological research. Later on, the Science disciplines were added to its
research agenda. With the dissolution of the University of East Africa in 1970,
the institute became the Makerere Institute of Social Research.

The history of MISR began with late Dan Mudoola, whose prolific life as
one of Makerere’s eminent political scientists and scholars was cut short by an
errant gunman’s bullet on February 22, 1993, while he was relaxing with his
long-time friend, Dr Francis Kidubuka, at their usual joint at Wandegeya. Apolo
Nsibambi had nicknamed him Uganda’s Huntington, because of his unswerving
commitment to institutional building. The MISR had been limping before
Mudoola, when the Department of Political Science and Public Administration
took over as Director in the 1980s. Within a relatively short time and with big
research grants solicited from international organisations such as the USAID and
the World Bank, Mudoola managed to rebuild the image of this once prestigious
research institute. The institute’s buildings too received a facelift. Unlike other
academic units at Makerere which combine both teaching and research, MISR
was conceived as, and continues to be a purely research facility; and that was
exactly what Dan Mudoola set out to do. The land tenure system was one of the
long running research projects for which MISR had successfully negotiated and
obtained funding from the USAID and involved several researchers. Dr Kisamba
Mugerwa, who later became a prominent Minister in the NRM Government was
one of the team leaders on this project. Even after going into politics, he retained
his office at MISR and would somehow find time for his research. Lawyers such
as Khidu Makubuya who, as we saw earlier, also left the university, becoming
first a junior Minister, then full Minister of Education and Sports and later
Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Uganda, and Kigula were part of
Kisamba Mugerwa’s research team. David Pulkol, once a Minister in Museveni’s
Government before he broke ranks with the NRM was another of MISR’s
prominent and long-term researchers. Pulkol also cleverly managed to combine
politics with his research at MISR. Once in a while, he would be seen at his office
at MISR in the evenings. The institute was slowly regaining its lost glory. Much as
Mudoola’s sudden death shocked the university community, it did more damage
to the institute of which he was the undisputed captain. The MISR had been
deprived of a dynamic and effective leader and, for once, the institute seemed to
be destined for a return to the doldrums. In fact, his intellectual brilliance had
beautifully compensated for his physical disability. One thing I remember about
him was his love for smoking the pipe. Then, people cared less about smoking
and there was no fuss about the health problems related to passive smoking.

With Mudoola suddenly gone, the search for a replacement was on. Fortunately, we did not have to look far. MISR was still under the ambit of the
Faculty of Social Sciences and Professor Apolo Nsibambi had completed his term as Dean of Social Sciences and was now available; so he took over as MISR’s new Director. Very soon, the pressure for more space for researchers and equipment began to mount as the institute’s research programmes grew and expanded. Therefore, Nsibambi asked the University Council to allow him convert the parking lot below the north wing into offices for his research staff and fortunately, Council agreed. The flatlets on top of what was once the parking lot retained their original purpose of providing accommodation to guest researchers. In fact, one of them had become home to Cole Dodge, who as we shall see later, played a critical role in the success of HYPERLINK “mailto:I@mak.com” \h I@mak.com whenever he came to Makerere. The residence of the Director of the former East African Institute of Social Research was within the institute’s complex. However, over the years and faced with pressure to provide staff housing, the university had degazetted building and allocated it to Professor Gustavas Sennyonga of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine. Professor Senyonga’s departure opened an unexpected opportunity for MISR to regain and put the former Director’s residence to better use. Before Professor Sennyonga left, Professor Nsibambi had requested the University Management to return the house to MISR to provide extra space for the MISR library, which was expanding. Although we were under intense pressure from staff for housing, we went along with Professor Nsibambi’s proposal and the house was handed back to MISR.

Professor Nsibambi quickly found money and renovated it for the library to move in. Nsibambi was very dynamic and before long, new research projects, including one on rational drug use in which Dr Richard Odoi Odome of the Department of Pharmacy was involved, had begun. This was an interesting development because, for the first time, Makerere Scientists were conducting research outside the traditional laboratory setting and field station, but in MISR. For years, Makerere staff from the science-based Faculties considered MISR a no go area for them. This collaboration was at the time considered a change of a decade-old mindset within the university academic community.

In 1994, MISR, which had long been part of the Faculty of Social Sciences was granted autonomy. This was a crowning moment for Professor Nsibambi, as it was one his significant achievements in his short term as its Director and he was very grateful to the University Administration. When he first introduced the proposal for autonomy, it drew mixed reactions and looked as though it would be next-to-impossible to convince Senate. He anticipated tough resistance from his colleagues in the Faculty of Social Sciences. Surprisingly the resistance, if any, was minimal. In any case, the Academic Registrar and the rest of us in the University Administration were already convinced that full autonomy was the best way forward for MISR if it were to grow to its full potential and regain its lost image as a research centre of excellence.
However, with autonomy came other problems. Besides the Librarian, who was under the University Librarian, MISR had two categories of professional staff, namely the Research Secretary, who was essentially an administrator and the research staff. Patrick Mulindwa was the Institute’s Research Secretary, a position he had occupied for a long time and was not in dispute. After restructuring the institute as part of the process leading to its autonomy, the Research Secretary position was the only permanent position left in the institute’s new establishment. Later, the University Council approved the addition of a statistician and an accountant to the institute’s permanent establishment. Like the Director’s position, the rest of the positions became contractual. From then on, the research staff had to renegotiate their tenure. This decision immediately became a serious and very sticky issue. As expected, researchers were not happy with the new arrangements. Professor Nsibambi was not in favour of putting his incumbent staff on contract. On the other hand, the Appointments Board insisted on implementing the new regulation to the letter. All existing research staff had to apply for re-appointment. Members of the Board were convinced there was merit in the contractual appointments. It was seen as one way of weeding out unproductive staff and, in the process, boosting the institute’s research productivity and research quality. In the end, it became a protracted issue between the Director and the Appointments Board and, admittedly, it was one of those problems I failed to resolve. As far as the Appointments Board was concerned, MISR had a new establishment in which no research staff held a permanent appointment until he or she earned tenure. Even their designations had slightly changed. The research positions were now graded from Research Fellow to Research Professor, the latter being the topmost in the new establishment.

There was more bad news for the MISR staff. As the research staff had no teaching obligations, unless they so wished, the University Council and the Appointments Board wanted more research productivity and output from them, measured in the form of published articles and papers in peer-reviewed journals, to justify their continued stay on the institute’s payroll. Secondly, any MISR staff seeking promotion had to produce twice as many publications as their counterparts in the teaching faculties and institutes, all published in peer-reviewed journals; another condition the Appointments Board insisted on applying to the letter. Quality research had become the buzzword and the Board wanted to see more of both quality and quantity. Keeping unproductive staff would undermine MISR’s core mandate. All this sounded fine. Indeed, every serious-minded person would have wanted to see MISR as a leading and reputable research centre. On the other hand, the reality was that most of the incumbent MISR research staff had permanent and pensionable appointments. Applying the new rules indiscriminately meant cancelling their existing appointments. That would present the university with a serious legal challenge. In addition, in the process of re-appointing staff, there would be inevitable causalities. It was already apparent that some of the research staff were performing below par and some were bound to lose their jobs. The easier
way out would have been to redeploy them; asking them to join the full-time staff of the Faculty of Social Sciences. This option did not find much favour with the affected staff. Professor Nsibambi continued to defend his staff until he left the institute in 1996 and stood his ground but the Appointments Board maintained its stand that staff employed to do research only must constantly prove they are capable of delivering and therefore, worthy of retaining their positions.

The Appointments Board’s position was simple. Research staff at MISR had to write grant-winning proposals to fund their research projects instead of waiting for money from the university. If they could not demonstrate their research productivity in terms of solicited grants and quality publications, there was no justification for the university to keep them as research staff. However, the Appointments Board had another idea. It wanted MISR to keep just a small core of research staff, with the majority of researchers drawn from other Faculties and academic units, who were interested in spending part of their time at MISR, carrying out research in collaboration with the MISR core staff. The Board’s proposal, which was accepted by the University Council, was a radical departure from the old way of doing business as usual at the institute. To ensure that the institute adhered to the policy change, its Governing Board, the equivalent of the Faculty Board was radically re-organised to reflect the changes, with Professor Elly Sabiiti of the Faculty of Agriculture becoming its first Chairperson. Dr Deborah Kasente of the Department of Women and Gender Studies was the first member of staff to test the workability of the new policy when she applied for a three-year stay at MISR to conduct research.

In 1996, after the general election, President Museveni appointed Professor Nsibambi a full cabinet Minister in charge of the Ministry of Public Service. To recap, Nsibambi had participated in the planning of the decentralised system of governance in Uganda, which the Government had adopted and implemented. While at MISR, he edited a book entitled Decentralisation and Civil Society: The Quest for Good Governance in Uganda, in which he had authored a couple of chapters. Mr F. X. Lubanga, who had been in charge of the Decentralisation Secretariat at the Ministry of Local Government before moving over to the Ministry of Education and Sports as Permanent Secretary, also wrote a chapter in the book. It was a scholarly piece for those interested in governance issues. Published by a local publishing house, Fountain Publishers, the book came out in 1998, two years after Nsibambi had left MISR, the same year he was appointed Minister of Education and Sports. The President must have been impressed with Nsibambi’s book and his professional input into the decentralisation policy, so he appointed him a full Minister in his Cabinet. I recall the President at one of the graduation ceremonies say something to the effect that that he had appointed Nsibambi as Minister of Public Service to find a living wage for MUASA members.

Unfortunately, Professor Nsibambi’s abrupt departure was another setback for MISR. As he was leaving the university, he could not help lamenting that he was
The experience and recollections from the faculties, schools, institutes and centres

leaving Makerere, which he had loyally served for 31 years. Little did he know that
within a relatively short time he would come back, but in a different capacity, as
its Chancellor. Shortly before he handed over, he came to me to discuss the future
of the institute as well as his possible successor. He was concerned that his hard
work would go to waste if we did not find the right kind of person to succeed him.
I pointed out to him that I understood his concerns but, as Vice Chancellor, my
powers were limited to temporary and part-time appointments only. Beyond that,
I had very little influence over what happened since, at the time, I was not even a
member of the Appointments Board. Apart from the Vice Chancellor and Deputy
Vice Chancellor, who were appointed by the Chancellor, the Appointments Board
was the only university body legally empowered to recruit, promote, discipline and
remove staff from office. Therefore, the question of his successor was beyond the
realms of my powers. However, if we could find a suitable person to act as caretaker
Director, I could make the temporary appointment. I wondered whether he had a
name in mind and indeed, he came with one. According to the assessment he had
made, he believed that Professor John Munene was the kind of person with the
intellectual stature to replace him. I knew Professor Munene quite well, so I had
no problem appointing him as Acting Director until we were ready to advertise
the post. But we had to sound him out for his opinion. After a brief discussion,
Professor Munene indicated he was willing to step in as Acting Director; after all,
he had been collaborating with MISR for some time. I restrained from writing the
letter appointing him Acting Director until such a time when the Appointments
Board was ready to fill the position.

While acting as Director, Professor Munene suggested that MISR could make
its expertise in research methodology available to other units if we allowed the
institute to conduct short courses. His idea received mixed reactions in Senate.
Some Senators thought it was a good idea and recommended approval of the
courses. Others thought MISR was deviating from its primary mandate. For the
rest of the time I was at Makerere, the proposal went cold. The one thing I recall
about Professor Munene was his passion for culture. As far as he was concerned,
every human endeavour, at least in Africa, had a cultural dimension. Coincidentally,
my recent experiences and observations about how Africans approach all sorts of
issues, including the way we do and manage our businesses and affairs, have
made me believe he had a point. The first time I heard him articulate his ideas on
culture, I could not help thinking here was another eccentric academic obsessed
with a weird idea. Without a doubt, John Munene helped MISR stabilise after
the sudden departure of its charismatic Director, Apolo Nsibambi.

After few months, the Appointments Board gave the University Secretary
permission to advertise the position of MISR Director. As expected, Professor
Munene put in an application and was one of the top contenders. Dr James
Sengendo, the former Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Dr Nakanyike Musisi,
an Associate Professor at the University of Toronto in Canada and Professor Abdu Kasozi of the Islamic University at Mbale were Munene's strongest challengers. During the interview, both Munene and Nakanyike Musisi were almost neck and neck, with Munene slightly ahead. Given its stance on gender and in a bid to promote the participation of more women in the top administrative positions, the University Council had advised that where two candidates, one male and the other female, were competing for the same position and were equally strong, after due consideration the Board should give preference to the female candidate.

After weighing the pros and cons, the Appointments Board offered the position to Dr Nakanyike Musisi. It was time for Professor Munene to return to his Institute of Psychology and get it off the ground. As it turned out, this arrangement was not as simple as the Board thought. John Munene had his eyes and mind firmly fixed on the MISR job. Certainly, the outcome of the interview did not go down well with him. He did not pretend about his disappointment and believed he had been robbed of his victory. As the old adage goes, “walls have ears” and indeed, one person amongst us who was present at the interview gave him the full details of what had transpired at the Appointments Board, almost verbatim. Believing that the Appointments Board had done a terrible injustice to him, he decided to appeal to Professor Nsibambi and the Inspector General of Government (IGG), to investigate the case. At the time, the IGG wielded a lot of power and with lots of biting teeth to go with it. When you received a letter or a telephone call from Jotham Tumwesigye, the former IGG, asking for an explanation on an issue which an anonymous informer had reported to him or simply informing you that he was investigating what appeared to be a serious matter at the university, you took his words seriously. Even in this case, we had to act as directed. However, after a thorough investigation lasting several weeks, the IGG reached the conclusion that there was no wrong doing. The Board had acted in accordance with the laid down university procedures and regulations during and after the interview. Therefore, Dr Nakanyike’s appointment as Director of MISR was legal and proper. I am sure the decision did not please Professor Munene, but as a true academic, a believer in the rule of law and the institution of the IGG, he gracefully accepted the IGG’s conclusions.

Dr Nakanyike Musisi was no stranger to Makerere. She had taken her BA degree in the Faculty of Arts in the 1970s and had joined the university’s staff development programme. After her two Masters degrees at Birmingham in the UK, she crossed over to Canada for her PhD at the University of Toronto. With the political turmoil of the 1970s and early 1980s raging in with no apparent end in sight, she decided to take refuge in Canada. She had been an excellent PhD student and as a result, the University of Toronto offered her a teaching position. She and her husband, Dr Seggane Musisi, a psychiatrist, were some of the few Ugandans in the Diaspora who never turned their backs on their homes.
and relatives in Africa. Dr Nakanyike Musisi liked Makerere and whenever she was on her summer holiday in Uganda, she would offer to teach a course or two in the Department of Women and Gender Studies as a guest lecturer for free. Her husband also lent a helping hand in the Department of Psychiatry in the Medical School. One of Dr Nakanyike Musisi sisters, Mary Seremba, was a Senior Personal Secretary in my office. In summer, Dr Nakanyike Musisi kept coming back to visit her family until she and her husband decided to come back to settle. At the time, she had made it to the rank of Associate Professor.

I first met Dr Musisi briefly in late 1979 at Quarry House, where both of us lived before she left for Canada. The Appointments Board was convinced that in her, we had found a person of the right calibre that would be able to continue with Mudoola and Nsibambi’s exemplary leadership and push MISR’s frontiers even further. Although she inherited the unresolved staff appointments problem, she also inherited an impressive ally of moveable and immoveable assets, including a fleet of relatively new vehicles. Some of her staff, like the long serving Sebina Zziwa, Sarah Neema and H. Birungi had been out studying for their PhDs at the University of Copenhagen. The link with the University of Copenhagen began when late Dan Mudoola was Director. Besides its own research fellows, during her time, MISR began attracting affiliate researchers from all over the world. This was largely through her many contacts abroad. The Makerere Institute of Social Research was beginning to look like the old East African Institute of Social Research once again. Like Professor Nsibambi, Dr Nakanyike preferred to commute to work from her own home in Entebbe – over 40 kilometres away, but she was more often than not on time. So, Professor Epelu Opio was spared the challenge of looking for a house befitting her status as Director of MISR.

I believe that Makerere University will best remember Dr Nakanyike Musisi for her role in the – HYPERLINK “mailto:I@mak.com” I@mak.com programme. Somehow and for reasons best known to herself, she decided to drop her acquired European name. She always wanted us to call her Nakanyike Musisi or occasionally Nakanyike Seggane Musisi. Besides her regular schedule as Director of MISR, we made extensive use of her talents in many other ways. She was very much in demand and was always available, ready and willing. She even found time to teach at Toronto whenever she could squeeze in a short vacation. I found her a woman of incredible energy, intellect and zeal. She was always on one committee or the other. Occasionally, I would ask her to represent me at some meeting I was unable to attend. She did a myriad of other chores unrelated to her job.

In spite of her hectic schedule, she could still find time to peer review and edit manuscripts for publication in international journals, write papers and even books. One of her interesting publications was a book entitled, Makerere University in Transition: 1993 – 2000, Opportunities and Challenges, which she co-authored.
with Dr Nansozi Muwanga of the Department of Political Science and Public Administration, published in 2003 by Fountain Publishers of Kampala and James Currey of Oxford, UK. The book was published as part of a series of case studies in African higher education commissioned by the original four American foundations that made up the Partnership for Higher Education in Africa, namely; the Carnegie Corporation of New York, Ford Foundation, MacArthur Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation. This publication captures the period I was Makerere’s Vice Chancellor and it makes a lot of interesting reading. I would recommend it to anyone interested in Makerere’s transition period or the history of that period from a slightly different perspective.

As we watched MISR’s continued march forward, we soon realised that the institute required more space. Right from its beginning in 1948, the institute owned a number of flats within its complex, built to accommodate resident research fellows. It also had a cluster of smaller buildings, which provided workspace for the researchers. Faced with a near-exponential demand for staff housing in the late 1970s, fuelled in part by the relative security the university campus offered at the time, the University Administration decided to put all of them in the senior housing pool. It was also the time the institute was almost in limbo. Over time, they fell into a state of disrepair. We decided to source for funds from the university’s private income to renovate the buildings and hand them back to MISR. The arrangement we had struck with the MISR Director allowed us to keep some staff there for some time until we identified alternative accommodation for them. In the end, we used it to swap debt. It was a messy arrangement, but served the purpose. Dr Nakanyike kept billing me and, more often than not, I had no money to pay her. I kept sending guests and staff there for accommodation and in the process my office kept accumulating debt, hoping that someday the University Bursar would be able to find enough money to pay. The return of the smaller non-residential houses gave MISR a lot more breathing space. It was equally interesting to see a number of research fellows, particularly the women, who had no doctoral degrees before I came in as Vice Chancellor, decide to study for them. Dr Abbey Nalwanga Sebina, originally America-trained, who obtained her PhD from the University of Copenhagen in Denmark really impressed me when she finally decided to go for it. Others like Dr Stella Neema, Betty Kwagala and Dr Fred Golooba Mutebi, to mention a few, also come to mind. MISR was truly back to its research mandate.

The School of Postgraduate Studies and Later the School of Graduate Studies

The little I know about graduate schools or postgraduate schools, depending on whether you prefer the American or the British version, is that they originated from the USA. The majority of British Commonwealth universities, perhaps
with the exception of Canada, did not have separate, moreover non-teaching graduate schools. Postgraduate work was taken as an integral part of a faculty or department. However, over time, the concept of a separate graduate school has spread worldwide. It is now rare to find a university worth its salt without some form of graduate school. For all I know in most universities, graduate schools function as clearing houses, although in a few instances some university graduate schools have staff of their own, normally drawn from the rest of the university academic departments. In effect, it is some form of dual appointment. As we have seen, postgraduate studies at Makerere was for many years the responsibility of a specialised committee of Senate called the Higher Degrees Committee chaired by the Vice Chancellor. Later, that role passed on to the Deputy Vice Chancellor. Research was the responsibility of another committee of Senate – the Research and Publications Committee. As the number of postgraduate students grew, so did the scope and complexity of the work of the Higher Degrees Committee. The Academic Registrar, who was Secretary to Senate, was also responsible for servicing these two busy committees. This was on top of other Senate committees and his heavy administrative duties.

In 1994, Senate recommended the establishment of a formal School of Postgraduate Studies to take over the functions and responsibilities of the Higher Degrees Committee as well as those of the Research and Publications Committee. The School was formally launched in the same year. The School had a Director as its head, who was at the level of a Faculty Dean, and a Board of Postgraduate Studies and Research made up of all Deans and Directors. Like all Deans, the Director reported to the Vice Chancellor and was a full member of Senate. Initially, there was a misunderstanding about the role the Academic Registrar was supposed to play in the School and whether the Director of the School was responsible to the Academic Registrar. The misunderstanding took some time to be sorted out, partly on the account of the personalities involved at the time. The confusion was eventually resolved and the School began to flourish, starting life in one of the university’s old buildings adjacent to the School of Education. Before the formal launch of the School, there was some semblance of a postgraduate school, which Bernard Onyango had put in place, with Professor Matia Semakula Kiwanuka as its head. As a result of the changes in the leadership of the Academic Registrar’s Department, it was scrapped in favour of a full-fledged independent Postgraduate School.

The opening of a full-fledged School of Postgraduate Studies was a clear indication that Makerere University was moving away from being a predominantly undergraduate teaching university to more of a research and postgraduate studies university. The Director of the School had to be appointed through internal advertising from amongst the academic members of staff for a four year-term, and had to be at a senior position of Professor with a proven track record of research, scholarship and postgraduate student supervision. Through this competitive
process, Professor John S. Mugerwa (now deceased), who was a former Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry, was appointed its first Director. Unfortunately, he died in 1999 before completing his full term. Professor John Opuda Asibo of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine replaced him in an acting capacity until a substantive Director was appointed in 2003.

The School’s vision was to take scholarship and research to the frontiers of knowledge; a reflection of the reason for its creation. In functional terms, the School was charged with the responsibility to register and monitor the registration status and progress of all postgraduate students at different levels and in different faculties/schools/institutes. Its other responsibility was to receive and approve postgraduate students’ research proposals and thesis/dissertation supervisors. In addition, it had to solicit funds to support the university’s research and postgraduate programmes, forge linkages with other institutions within and outside Uganda for purposes of supporting and strengthening the university’s research function and postgraduate programmes, and also provide courses on research methodology. It had to administer research and publications in general on behalf of the University Senate. The School also had an obligation to produce an annual report on the on-going research and publications in the university.

The school’s income for research and research administration came from a variety of sources, the most significant being the Carnegie Corporation of New York, which started supporting the School in 2003 to document all on-going research and improve the School’s capacity to manage and coordinate research. At the time, research management and coordination was increasingly becoming a sticky issue between the School and the Faculties and required sorting out. The confusion was mainly about who was supposed to do what, the School’s role against that of the Faculties. Some Deans felt that the School was usurping the powers of the Faculties. Besides helping us to sort out what was perceived as toe-stepping and other administrative problems, the Carnegie support enabled the School to capture information on all research projects undertaken by the postgraduate students in every department and the publications from the university’s research output. In turn, this helped the School to define research priorities, and reduce duplication of effort and plagiarism.

The Sida/SAREC grant, although specific, was another equally important source of funding for the School. In fact, as we have seen elsewhere, the Director of the School was also the overall university-wide Sida/SAREC grant coordinator. Above all, from its internally generated revenue, the university itself started making a significant contribution to the School’s research fund. The University Council had made it mandatory for every undergraduate student to contribute 10,000 Uganda shillings towards research per year. With an undergraduate student population (day and evening) close to 30,000 this source alone brought in almost 300 million shillings per year, the equivalent of about US$160,000.
Not a jackpot by world standards, but certainly a significant amount by Uganda's economic standards. The university had never funded research out of its own resources before. Now it was doing it and, by and large, this was a sustainable source. The postgraduate students were chipping in with 20,000 shillings each per year. This brought in an extra 60 million shillings to the fund per year. In addition, the University Council passed a policy which required every faculty/school/institute which had students under the private student scheme or was generating income from other sources, to contribute one per cent of that income annually to the university's research fund, managed by the School of Postgraduate Studies. This was another big shot in the arm of the school.

In 2003, the school's Board decided to change the name of the school from School of Postgraduate Studies to the School of Graduate Studies. The change was prompted by a number of factors which the Board took into consideration. Inter alia, students, who had received their first degree, were referred to as graduates, so after graduation they went to a graduate school. Secondly, the term Graduate School had become popular worldwide and was preferred to School of Postgraduate Studies. The change was approved and the new name confirmed. The new name came with some additional changes both within the Board and in the School's administration. Before the change of the name, the position of Associate or Deputy Director of the School was not an established post. Up to then, the arrangement was informal. In the revised School's structure, the position was formalised. According to a gentleman's agreement we had with the School, if the Director came from a science-based faculty, the Deputy Director had to come from the arts and humanities. The converse was supposed to apply. During the time of Professor Opuda Asibo, Professors Oswald Ndolerire of the Faculty of Arts and Professor David Bakibinga of the Faculty of Law had respectively acted as Deputy Directors of the School. When Professor Bakibinga was appointed substantive Director of the School, I requested Professor Yusto Kaahwa of the Physics Department to act as his Deputy. When Senate was re-organised under the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act of 2001, there was an attempt to make the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs) the chair of the School's Board, but the School was reluctant to accept the new arrangement. The School, and understandably so, argued that the new arrangement undermined the authority of the Director, citing that in essence, the directorship would be stripped of whatever power it had in the critical affairs of the School. I could sense some elements of frustration amongst those who were in charge of the School at the time. It seemed that the advocates of this proposal were taking the School back to the days of the Higher Degrees Committee. Unfortunately, I left the university before the problem was fully resolved. However, going by the 2001 Act under Section 48 (1), if the School's Board was constituted as an Academic Board, then the Director was its legal chairperson. However, I had to leave those matters to my successor to resolve.
Other changes included the expansion of the School’s establishment from one Deputy Director to two – one to take charge of the graduate studies and the other to manage research. A proposal was made to add four more Assistant Registrars to act as Publications Administrator, Editorial Board Administrator; Grants and Fund Sourcing Administrator and General Graduate School Administrator. However, by the time I left, the School had yet to justify the proposed new posts to Kibirige Mayanja’s Planning and Development Department and Council Committee. I must say it was an exciting moment to have participated in the proposal to start a proper Graduate School at Makerere, which I want to believe was another innovation and transformation.